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Module 3: Final Draft

Impact of trauma on trans femme AMAB (assigned male at birth) voices on HRT

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Proposal: Impact of trauma on trans femme AMAB (assigned male at birth) voices on HRT

Context:

Voices are one of the key markers of identity. The vocal apparatus is utilized as one of the fundamental manners of human expression and is completely unique to each individual (Kreiman & Sidtis, 2011). Transgender and non-binary individuals often undergo speech therapy in order to attain an instrument that fits their identity (Kennedy and Thibeault, 2020). Many transgender and non-binary people have been subject to prejudice, discrimination, and violence impacting their physical well-being and their psychological well-being (VAWnet, 2019). By utilizing existing research on how identity and voice are intertwined, how transgender people will undergo treatment to have their voice aligned with their gender identity, how the vocal apparatus reacts to stress, and how transgender people often experience distressing discrimination and harassment, there is a need to explore and gain more knowledge.

Justification and intended impact:

There is still very little research on transgender individuals and their experiences, and even less research on how transgender and non-binary folk relate to and utilize their voices (Graham, 2019). This research will fill a gap in knowledge about an oppressed group of people and obtain useful information that has the potential to understand the experiences of trans and non-binary voices on a physiological level concerning trauma as well as the impact of HRT and psychologically concerning how perception, identity, and mental health play a role in the use and the health of the voice.

Intention:

Using a qualitative methodology I am going to gather data from initial surveys to select participants and ensure they fit the demographic of the research. Then I am going to send questionnaires to the 5 selected participants to gain more insight by quantifying their experience, scaling it numerically. Then I will gather most of the data through semi-structured interviews, asking participants to elaborate on their perception of their voice, psychologically stressful experiences and the impact of that on their voice, and their experience on HRT. Then I will evaluate the data and conduct thematic analysis by coding the data and drawing conclusions on any connections that arise from the participants. The deadline for the final draft is due on January 31, so my timeline will be to create the research instruments and distribute the surveys the first week of November and interview participants the following two weeks. Then analyze the data the last week of November and begin writing my draft in December, with enough time to edit and submit my final draft in time for the deadline.

Ethics and Insider Research:

Recalling past psychologically stressful/traumatic experiences and asking questions about private information such as health treatment can be of risk to the participants (Amir, Badour, and Freese, 2009). I will mitigate these risks by disclosing any topics, study activities, or questions that may be triggering in the informed consent, listing mental health resources that can assist the participants, assuring confidentiality policies, and disclosing what identifiers may be at risk of disclosure. As an insider, I will recognize my bias, especially drawing upon my personal and professional community as potential participants, and also take into account my own experience as a nonbinary vocalist who works with transgender voice students.

Proposed Learning Outcomes

The learning outcomes for this research are how transgender people have been 1. physiologically, 2. psychologically, and 3. socially silenced. With this greater understanding of how their identity, life experiences, and mental/physical health impact the vocal apparatus on a physiological and psychological level, trans folk can then take steps to utilize their voices to express, communicate, and advocate for themselves to create a more equitable and accepting world.

Impact of trauma on trans femme AMAB (assigned male at birth) voices on HRT

INTRODUCTION:

Voices are one of the key markers of identity and are utilized as one of the fundamental manners of human expression (Kreiman & Sidtis, 2011). Transgender and non-binary individuals often undergo hormone replacement therapy or speech therapy in order to attain an instrument that fits their identity (Kennedy and Thibeault, 2020). Many transgender and non-binary people have been subject to prejudice, discrimination, and violence impacting their physical well-being and their psychological well-being (VAWnet, 2019). I drew upon existing research on how identity and voice are intertwined, how transgender people undergo treatment to have their voice aligned with their gender identity, how transgender people often experience distressing discrimination and harassment, and how this impacts their voices. There is a need to explore and gain more knowledge in this field to amplify oppressed and marginalized people.

There is still very little research on transgender individuals and their experiences, and even less research on how transgender and non-binary folk relate to and utilize their voices (Graham, 2019). This study has filled a gap in research about an oppressed group of people, and I obtained information and firsthand accounts through this study, which aids in understanding the experiences of trans femme voices on a physiological level concerning trauma and the voice, as well as psychological impacts on perception, identity, and mental health that play a role in the use of the voice.

Transgender and non-binary voices have been silenced by violence and oppression throughout history. With this greater understanding of how their identity, life experiences, and mental/physical health impact the vocal apparatus on a physiological and psychological level, trans femmes' can then take steps to utilize their voices to express themselves authentically. Voices do not just communicate; they also advocate for the people to whom the voice belongs and for others that the voice is being raised on behalf of. With more insight on how trans people use their voices to authentically speak their truth and stories, we will create a more equitable and accepting world.

My personal learning outcomes for this research are to investigate the impact of discrimination on the voices of trans femmes on HRT, so I can consider how my trans femme clients approach and use their voice. With the data from their recollections of how identity, life experiences, and mental health impacted their vocal apparatus' on a physiological and psychological level, trans femmes can then take steps to utilize their voices to express, communicate, and advocate for themselves to create a more equitable and accepting world.

LITERATURE REVIEW

“Gender and history impact how we read the tone, velocity, and pitch of the voice, but they also shape parameters of where and when particular voices are invited to speak or expected to remain silent” (Ehrick, 2015). Transgender voices have been silenced due to stigma and phobia throughout history (Parker et al., 2022). This research study on trans voices is especially relevant considering the current political climate in the United States. There are almost 250,000 trans youth living in states that have either introduced or made legal measures, or laws were pending to ban access to gender-affirming care in the 2024 legislative session. This is slightly more than three-quarters of all trans youth ages 13-17 in the United States of America (Redfield et al., 2024). These bills negatively impact transgender youth by denying them medical care that is deemed best for them by healthcare professionals (Movement Advancement Project, 2024). The Movement Advancement Project (2023) also cites various tactics that target trans youth and adults from accessing care, criminalizing trans folk and their allies, and rolling back legal protections for trans people to exist in public and within American society. In 2023 almost two hundred bills were proposed, and twenty-six passed, but in 2024, over six hundred anti-trans bills were considered, and over fifty were passed in 2024. Eighty-seven bills were considered at the federal level last year (Trans Legislation Tracker, 2024). There is a major rise in transphobia and also the legal and societal protections of trans people in the United States.

Given the legislature that silences and erases trans people, it is of the utmost importance to amplify trans voices in a theoretical, social, and physical sense. Ryan Aguirre wrote Finding the Trans Voice: A Review of the Literature on Accommodating Transgender Singers in 2018, which indicates the need to welcome trans voices in spaces that tend to be cisgendered. Gathering resources on how to accommodate and include trans voices is significant, considering how a study by Case and Meier (2014) notes, “Many educators do not feel well-prepared to work with trans*+ students.” Some of the findings conclude the obstacles that prevent allies and others in the music education field from working with trans people include “fear of offending those with whom they work, lack of training, and a feeling of not being able to make a difference” (Ji, 2007; Ji, Du Bois, & Finnessy, 2009; Ji & Fujimoto, 2013).

A study by Christopher Cayari published in the International Journal of Music Education investigated The Transgender Singing Voice conference held in 2017. Data analysis identified significant topics of interest at the conference. Themes included the vocal production, pedagogy, physiology, and identity of trans*+ singers. The conclusions of that study indicated that trans*+ attendees and allies were empowered due to the demystification of trans*+ experiences. (Cayari, 2019). This is evidence which indicates the power of narratives.

In my review of relevant literature, I have discovered there is more narrative research on trans experiences in general. In the voice world, there are many fewer narrative studies, and in the ones that do exist, they tend to be in the music education and choral ensemble spheres than there are in the general voice pedagogy field. There is research on the experiences of trans*+ youth in school music choral programs. (Palkki, 2016). Nichols (2013) published one of the first research studies on trans*+ issues in the National Association for Music Education journal. The

narrative research told the story of Rie Daisies, a young trans*+ songwriter, and illustrated Rie's account of discrimination in the educational system throughout middle and high school. Other research on trans experiences in music education has explored intersectionality, which notes how race, gender, socioeconomic status, and sexuality impact each other in an individual's experience and also the social workings of society. (Kruse, 2016).

On the other hand, there are quantitative studies done on the physiological aspect of hormone replacement therapy and voice transition. Many studies examine how to help individuals accomplish voice feminization or masculinization. Studies report that pitch of voice is the issue most trans people struggle with concerning vocal functioning (Dacakis et. al. 2012). An article titled, "Pitch Elevation in Male-to-female Transgender Persons" by Meister et. al. (2017), is one example of the quantitative trend in this topic of research. Another article by Deanna Kawitzky and Tara McAllister (2018) notes that the variations in the frequencies of formants in people assigned male or female at birth directly contribute to how others perceive the voices as masculine or feminine. This study explored if "visual-acoustic biofeedback" is effective in assisting transgender women achieve formant targets typical of cisgender women. The study also investigated if such a shift influences the perception of femininity in speech." While this quantitative lens is important, especially for assisting trans femme folk to achieve their goals of using a voice that aligns with their identity, if one does not understand why trans femmes desire to have their voice fit specific qualities, there is a gap in the research. Psychosocial issues were the most frequently reported voice-related impacts (Dacakis et. al. 2012), which indicates a need for understanding how hormone replacement therapy impacts voices in a psychological and social sense, not just a utilitarian sense.

There is discussion around including trans voices, utilizing inclusive language, and finding ways in which to serve the trans community as allies, however there is not much narrative research on the impact of HRT and voice training. Graham (2022) notes that research on outcomes for the transitioning voice is sparse. He notes that anecdotal narratives on the topic of undesired outcomes give both professional and serious avocational singers pause. This lack of readily available evidence-based research presents a challenge both to trans singers and the voice professionals working with them.

Many of the qualitative methods employed in the current research are semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, and surveys. When investigating quantitative aspects of trans voices, methods employed controlled experiments involving recordings, laryngoscopy, and collecting and measuring quantifiable data. In order to close the gap in research of trans femme folks' perception of their voice on HRT, I must utilize the narratives of trans femme individuals who are undergoing treatment. Since hormone replacement therapy has no significant physical impact on their voice (Sauerland, 2022), there is research on the impacts of voice feminization speech therapy, but not on the perceptions of these individuals who are not undergoing speech therapy but are pursuing HRT.

"Feminists have used the word 'voice" to refer to a wide range of aspirations: cultural agency, political enfranchisement, sexual autonomy, and expressive freedom, all of which have been historically denied to women (Dave 2022). Dave's point indicates the significant role of

metaphorical voice in society as a means of authority and how that has been stripped of women. Trans femmes who also have another intersection of being queer have been stripped of their voices in another way as well. This shows a need to investigate how trans femmes use their voice as humans and as members of society.

METHODOLOGY

I utilized a relativist ontological positioning, as when I gathered personal anecdotes, I needed to view the participants' lived experience as valid and true to their perception. My epistemological position relies on subjectivity, as the nature of this study is about interpreting how experiences shape the participant's behavior, perception, and worldview. I utilized an interpretive paradigm in order to position myself in a manner that can investigate how my participants make sense of their reality and understand themselves, as well as lend perspectives from the constructivist paradigm, as I evaluated how my participants interact with the world. According to Clandinin & Rosniek (2006), inquiring about the subject's narrative goes beyond the stories of the participants' experiences. It also investigates the social systems and functions in which the individual exists within. This is why I utilized both interpretive and constructivist paradigms, which have proven to be valuable for the purpose of this study.

Phenomenological qualitative methodology uses an approach that examines the phenomena of how my participants experience their lives as trans femme individuals. I used critical gender theory to position my research, as this theory examines the power systems that marginalize certain gender expressions in many societies and throughout human history. This research will fill a gap in knowledge about an oppressed group of people and obtain useful information that has the potential to understand the experiences of trans and non-binary voices on a physiological and psychological level. My literature review informed me of the gap in knowledge rather than giving me greater insight on the topics, so I utilized inductive reasoning to create my interview questions.

I gathered most of the data through semi-structured interviews. I asked participants to elaborate on their perception of their voice, psychologically stressful experiences and the impact of that on their voice, and their experience on HRT. I initially sent a survey to ensure the participants qualified for the demographics of the study and gathered other basic information. Then, I sent a follow-up questionnaire to scale their experiences, which lends itself to a quantitative methodology, ensuring I was able to provide a framework for the narratives to breathe within. Limiting the likert scale to 1-5, I was able to get a general scope of participants' perception. I utilized interpretive phenomenological and thematic analysis to sift through the data from the interviews to draw my conclusions. I could have also used a focus group and taken a more constructivist approach by drawing observations on group interactions. However, I was hesitant to organize a focus group, given the participants limited availability, and acknowledged that it would hinder their willingness to share traumatic recollections with a group of strangers, rather than just one person who guaranteed confidentiality.

Recalling past psychologically stressful/traumatic experiences and asking questions about private information such as health treatment can be of risk to the participants (Amir, Badour, and Freese, 2009). I mitigated these risks by disclosing any topics, study activities, or questions that may be triggering in the informed consent, listing mental health resources that can assist the

participants, assuring confidentiality policies, and disclosing what identifiers may be at risk of disclosure. As an insider, I recognized my bias, especially as I drew upon my personal and professional community as potential participants. I also took into account my own experience as a non-binary vocalist who works with transgender voice students. Working with people I knew personally made it easy to find participants.

Participants were informed of how data was collected through surveys, questionnaires, and semi-structured interviews. This multimethod approach enabled me to ensure results for this study were reliable, as it enabled cross-referencing the results. Participants will know their data will be collected through Google Forms stored on Google Drive, and the interviews will be held on the video chat platform Zoom and audio recorded with the Voice Memos iOS app. They were provided a full understanding of the nature of the questions, the full scope of the topics, and how the data will be about their personal lived experiences. They were notified they may withdraw from participation at any time, and their data will be protected. They all signed consent forms and verbally confirmed their consent at the beginning of the interview.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted. I conducted interviews with participants on December 12, December 13, December 20, and January 3. I conducted these interviews in my apartment in Brooklyn. One participant was able to meet me in person at my home, and the others were done on Zoom. Participants were located in Brooklyn, NY; Boston, MA; Austin, TX; and Portland, OR. I asked the participants questions about what identity means to them, how they utilize their voices in their daily lives, and how they perceive their voices before and during HRT. I then asked the participants to recall stressful experiences they may have experienced related to being a trans person and how that impacted how they perceive and utilize their voice, in a physical sense but also a theoretical/social sense. I then sent out a follow-up questionnaire asking the participants to quantify their feelings and perceptions on a scale of 1-5.

The Participants:

Participant A currently is not working, residing in Brooklyn, NY, but previously worked in food service and human resources in Boston, MA. Participant B works as an EMT and researcher in Boston, MA. Participant C is a student at Portland, Oregon. Participant D is a New York-based musician currently traveling and touring with a show.

Participants are trans femme individuals assigned male at birth in their twenties, two of them using they/them pronouns and two of them using she/her pronouns. Two of them identify as white, and two of them identify as Asian. The data from the survey concluded that the participants' age range was from 21-29. Participants A and C had attempted voice and speech feminization therapy but stopped one relating to identity and one related to physical health reasons. Participants were taking estrogen (estradiol), dutasteride, and progesterone.

FINDINGS

After the interview, participants also were asked to complete a survey. They were asked, on a scale of 1-5 with one being ranked the least and five being the most. The following graphs below are a quantifiable description to give a framework for the qualitative data provided in the interview.

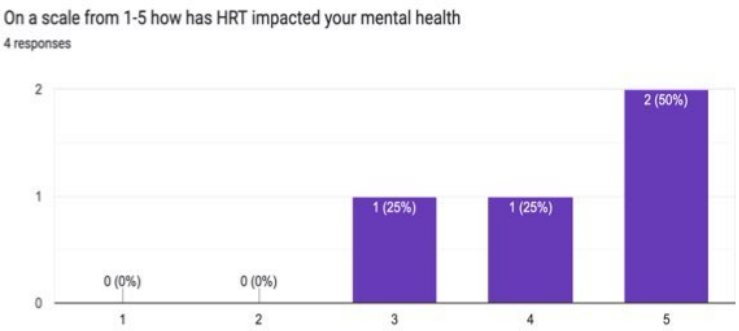


Figure 1

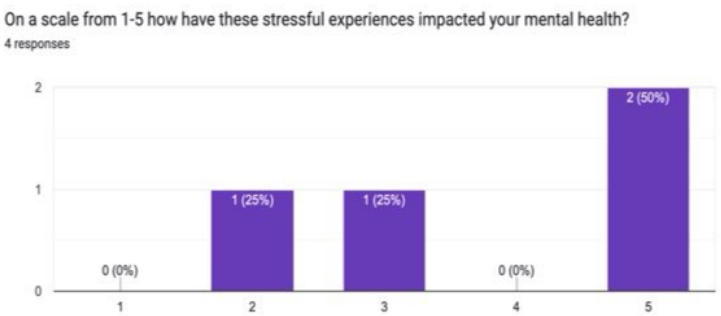


Figure 2

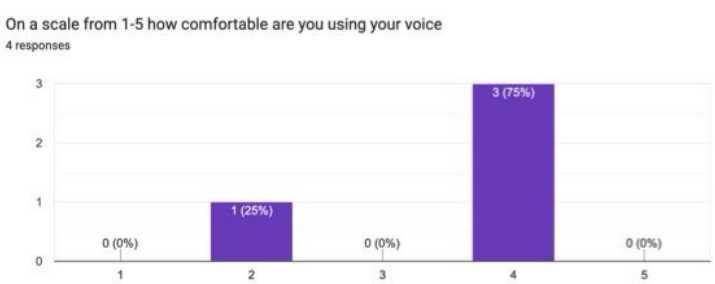


Figure 3

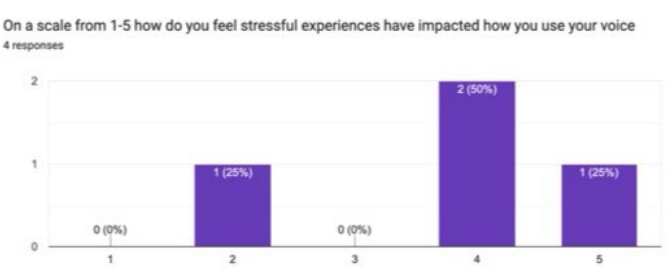


Figure 4

All participants noted that HRT has helped them feel more comfortable in their identity. The nonbinary participants both expressed that with HRT, they felt less of a need to "perform" femininity and could feel more secure as trans people. Through thematic analysis the following themes that the findings are organized in were developed inductively. Quotations have been edited.

Participants' perception of their voice:

Participants were asked how they perceive their voice, and I received a variety of responses that were very personal. Some responses were related to gender or the utilitarian use of the voice; however, there is a lot of psychological and emotional weight related to the voice. Participant A noted her voice as "definitely being on the deeper side. The way in which I speak does have a more masculine tint to it because I was raised and socialized as a man. Women have a different cadence of speech than I do." This connects with the quantitative studies cited in the literature review such as "Pitch Elevation in Male-to-female Transgender Persons" by Meister et. al. (2017) on how to physiologically feminize transitioning voices.

Participant B noted that on HRT her voice will break more often. She expressed that she knows her voice "isn't the most feminine sounding," but she doesn't care to change anything. The apathy towards her voice is attributed to the mental burden she experiences from being trans. Participant C expressed anxieties around perceiving their voice due to how others may perceive their voice and the potential judgments that can follow the perception. This all connects with voice being one of the key markers of identity (Kreiman & Sidtis, 2011) and how one's voice changes the perception towards others and therefore themselves.

Some responses were related to perception of how their voice sounds, unrelated to gender expectations. Participant A said, "Our voice is what we use to communicate, to make connections, whether or not it's us physically using our voice. It's how we can, for lack of better terms, justify our existence to the world around us. Participant B noted, "I don't really know what I really sound like. I don't know if I'll ever be able to fix the disconnect between how it feels when I speak versus what it sounds like when I hear it back on recording." Participant D expressed,

> *"Voice is a thing we used to communicate; musically, it's…another instrument in the arsenal. My voice is one of my many instruments. It's also the most fraught one. I would say because it changes over time. It's also related to a lot of emotional weight from previous trauma and previous experiences that have made me think my voice doesn't matter."*

Discriminatory experiences causing psychological stress and trauma

Participants were asked to recall discriminatory experiences that were psychologically stressful and/or traumatic. They expressed how being trans and specifically trans femme would bring verbal violence, threats of physical violence, exclusion, erasure, and disrespect. Participant A and participant C expressed specific accounts of misogyny that directly impacted their safety, mental health, and how they were able to interact in the spaces they were in. Participant B

recalled being discriminated against in various ways, for being queer, for being trans femme, for being a lesbian, and for being Asian American. This impacted her access to medical care in a variety of settings. She also recalls the physical and sexual violence that she faced as a trans person, as well as the general negative, hostile treatment in spaces she receives, as well as being treated differently by others. Participant A went into further detail about her experiences of objectification:

> *"I've had numerous negative experiences, either based on the fact that I am transgender because they were already attracted to me, and now they don't want to justify that attraction to themselves, but they do want to put the blame on me for being provocative for being a sexual creature. I have been called a slut, a whore, a bop. It's slang that stands for blown-out pussy… no matter what I wore when I was masculine presenting, no one ever said things like that to me, because men aren't held to the same standards."*

Participant C recognized a loss in privilege as they began presenting more femininely:

> *"The longer I was on (HRT), the more I realized how people were treating me differently… I could see my "male privilege" going away. Voice is a really big thing for that because a deeper voice gets, (it is) perceived as more masculine. People pay more attention to you and your speaking. People give you more respect. I've been shown a pattern where if I speak up, then sometimes people will talk down (to me). The experiences that I went through the first time that I was on HRT did show me that the more femininely I present myself, the less seriously people will take me."*

Participant C also expressed specific instances of discrimination during their studies. A professor gendered the class by dividing groups within the gender binary, so the participant sent a polite email to the professor proposing gender-neutral terms be used when addressing the class. The professor wrote a retaliatory and insulting reply email stating, "I'll never understand the experience of what it feels like to be a woman." Another instance the subject recalled was their private instrument professor constantly misgendering them, making no genuine efforts to correct his efforts, and even admitting to joking about the participant's gender identity with his spouse (who was also the participant's work supervisor). These incidents jeopardized the participants' education and employment. Participant D elaborated on their experiences of discrimination and trauma:

> *"The constant trauma of being told you don't exist and you're a fucking crazy is the main one. Especially now, politically, everyone's like, We're going to erase transgenderism. Like it's not a fucking "-ism," it's a fucking group of people. That would probably be the main trauma, and then obviously, like, the little trauma of having to constantly explain yourself to other people and fight for you…there's that whole dance in your head, 'Do I correct them?' It is like the culmination of all these different microaggressions... (is) why a lot of people detransition. But other than hate-filled encounters on the street, not (physical) violence."*

Impact of discrimination on use of physical voice

Participants were asked how this impacted their voice. Participants A B and C noted how these experiences resulted in them utilizing their voice less, on an internal level within themselves, on a physical level of them speaking due to safety and mental/emotional burden. Participant A expressed,

> *"When you physically withhold your voice, there is also an internalized shift inside of you, prior to me transitioning, even internally, I'm much more taciturn, I'm less likely to speak out about anything. I've definitely at times become very withdrawn, lost interest and making new connections, communicating with people. I feel like prior to transition, I was a very affable kind person and now I feel that I'm much more much more cynical to a degree because a lot of the assumptions when I'm creating new connections with people is that part of the reason that they approached me in the first place is because they are sexually attracted to me and that they're objectifying me just how my body's developed and my pretty face. It's definitely been rather severe."*

Participant B disclosed, "It's physically and emotionally exhausting. Using my physical voice in (personal) situations. It doesn't really affect or change anything.. So why put too much effort or thought into it because it's just going to make my life more miserable." Participant C also noted how when they use their voice, they must go through the process of thinking how to present themselves using their voice as a matter of safety.

> *It makes me feel a little bit more like I have to be careful with my words and with the battles that I choose to fight…Depending on what voice I'm using, people respond differently, (which) can be associated with safety. One of the reasons that I stopped estrogen in the first place was because I felt like I was losing that sense of comfort and safety that masculinity had provided me, even though it wasn't an authentic feeling towards my experience. I was scared of the judgment of other people and the way that that was going to impact my life."*

Identity is not just tied to expression, this insight from participant C indicates that how one presents and identifies can have a direct impact on one's safety. Participant D noted that while they continue to remain outspoken, they did note the mental and emotional burden of speaking out.

> *"I'm an outspoken person… I'm gonna talk no matter what. But it does make me more aware of how I am perceived, right? It's that cognitive load I was talking about that all trans people go through…When I'm out in the world and want to be seen in my identity by strangers, I have a different voice…That's a role that I play. When I'm out in the world for survival because I want to be seen as more not in the (gender) binary."*

Impact of discrimination on the use of theoretical voice

Participants were asked how discrimination impacted their theoretical voice. At first, they all asked what that meant, and upon further explanation, they understood the question was meant to inquire about how they felt their experiences shaped how they asserted themselves without the use of their physical voice. Instances of this would include sharing thoughts and opinions, expressing feelings and sensations, and making their presence and state of being known to those around them. This could manifest in a variety of ways, from sharing their opinions on the internet, through creative means, in a political sense, and in a social sense. All participants felt like it impacted how they used their voice in a creative, political, and social sense. Participant A felt that her experiences of violence had impacted her theoretical voice significantly.

> *"I'm not really on the Internet, but I can't imagine myself writing internet comments and giving my opinion on things because I am so used to not saying anything. I don't think I was always like that, but I think when you're so restrictive and hesitant about using your physical voice, it does create changes in how you use it, internally and in other situations as well."*

When asked about how this impacted her creative voice, she responded, "I don't really use that anymore either, because that…feels like an extension of my physical voice. I'm much less likely to write music, to write poems, things that I have done in the past." Participant B noted that while advocacy is important, she would not choose to steer the majority of conversations she has with the objective of advocacy due to perception of others, as well as mental burden. Participant C noted how stereotypes and expectations around gender and musical genre have impacted their creative voice.

> *"When I'm creating music, if I'm feeling really queer, I might make more queer music, and if I've gone through an experience that makes me feel like I've been marginalized, I might make a darker song that is expressing those emotions… But I do feel like I have to sometimes conform to the boundaries of the art itself because I am afraid of looking stupid. I'll scroll through Instagram reels, and I'll see a trans girl who's making rap music in a voice that doesn't necessarily sound like a clock as an afab female voice but is still a very feminine voice. That person will have to delete lots of comments or just have their comments filled with bigots because online that supportive community does not present itself in the same way. If I look at that, that definitely is like an attack on artists' abilities to use their voice. I have sacrificed that range of my voice when I'm making specific types of music because I'm afraid of people perceiving it a certain way."*

The societal expectations that correlate various labels and roles to specific genre characteristics are a means of silencing creative voices in a variety of mediums. The pressures to have art well received or even have an audience to perceive the art at all are significant, especially with the pressures and quantifiable success in social media. Participant D noted how using their voice in the face of oppression will take different forms of using their voice.

> *"More importantly, my advocacy for trans rights and telling my story rather than singing my story will be more important in the future. It's not staying silent in the face of our oppression…like speaking out, writing a song, going to a rally, speaking out at a rally, talking to a bunch of cis people about being trans at like a talk. Not letting people erase*

> *my identity and asserting my pronouns is a huge thing that I do every day. Part of my work is to create an environment by speaking up using my voice and being a very vocal advocate for my people, in both big ways, like policy and creating an environment, and little ways too, like affirming people who come in who are in different parts of their trans journey and being very vocal about who they are to other people."*

This shows how powerful the physical and theoretical voice is and the impact it can make when one has the capacity to effectively use their voice. Dave (2022) comments, "In this context, 'voice' has become a metaphor for textual authority... This metaphor has become so pervasive, so intrinsic to feminist discourse, that it makes us too easily forget (or repress) the concrete physical dimensions of the female voice upon which this metaphor was based." Seeing how the participants' voices have been silenced in a theoretical context connects back to how trans femme voices have been oppressed in a very physical and political manner. Voice is not just the physical entity; the theoretical voice is directly linked to the physical voice.

Other findings from where the interviews led:

It appeared from the data gathered that misogyny greatly impacted the participants. It tended to have a more extreme impact on those who were white presenting than those who were Asian American due to harmful racial stereotypes. Often the misogyny reported by the participants was physical violence but also mostly verbal violence from others. Participant A recalled:

> *"I've been told that my body's pornographic multiple times. At the root of it, that is just misogyny, but because I'm trans, you have that extra flavor, that extra twist…it becomes trans misogyny. It was hard for me to understand the scope of what systemic misogyny means in this society until after I started developing those secondary sex characteristics: hips, breasts, and so on. I realized the absolute severity of it; it's been a harrowing experience for me. It definitely has severe impacts on my mental health."*

Participant C recalled an instance of being assaulted at work in a food service position. Industries such as the food service industry are known for misogyny (Williamson, 2022).

> *"I was like walking up to (the head chef) to ask him for something, and we were talking, and he squeezed my chest randomly. I was like, What the fuck? He was like, 'Oh, I thought you had something in your pocket because it was like a shirt with pockets.' And that is one reason that I've stopped estrogen for the first time, because I didn't want that to happen again, and I had associated those two things in my brain because, like femininity and discrimination, they are kind of connected. At the time I wasn't trying to just be me; I was trying to be more feminine."*

Participant D gave some valuable insights about intersectionality and how stereotypes about race can impact perception of gender:

> *"I do think being Asian plays into that because I think there's already a feminization of Asian people and an infantilization of Asian people. Which is non-productive because I play into this cute Asian stereotype. They don't care if I have a high voice because it's cute and fun and plays into stereotypes of Asian people being cute and demure and subservient. I think that's why I get away with it more. People perceive me as this cute*

Asian person, which is derived from the fetishization of Asian women."

This insight aligns with what Cayari (2018) notes, that "race, religion, class, sexuality, and a plethora of other identities should be considered when serving and discussing the trans*+ community." Intersectionality impacting the participants who identified as people of color (Asian American). The stereotype that Asian people are perceived as more "feminine" in America was one of the reasons why participant D felt like they avoided misogyny. Participant B did also express experiencing both misogyny and racial discrimination.

Physical Environments and Safety

Environments such as workplaces, specific cities and areas with more 'liberal' social values, and various social settings contributed to a feeling of more safety for the non-binary participants. Participant C noted, "Most people use they/them for me in Portland (Oregon), and I don't really have to do anything because I feel like I fit that demographic… I'm very lucky to have a supportive community." Participant D observed, "I have not faced discrimination. I am privileged in my (field of) work. I work in theater primarily and in music, relatively like open-minded (at least on the surface) people. I'm very lucky that my career choices support my identity." This connects with previous findings on how one's presentation relates to safety, especially participant C's anecdote on how their work environment changed their decision to be on HRT. An individual's surroundings will directly impact them on a psychological and physiological level.

CONCLUSION

My initial aim for this project was to investigate how trans femmes' voices have been physiologically, psychologically, and socially silenced. In conducting semi-structured interviews, I found that discrimination and oppression have direct impacts on silencing marginalized people's voices. Factors such as misogyny and additional influences such as the intersectionality of race, gender, sexuality, and queer identity have a direct impact on how trans femmes utilize their voice. While I expected this to be true, the extent of the violence silencing trans femmes' voices was something new I found. Another outcome I discovered was the consequences of trans femmes' using their physical voices, resulting in violence, extreme psychological stress, and silencing their inner mental/emotional voice, and additional hesitancy or lack of energy to utilize their voices in a theoretical social or creative way.

Limitations and Recommendations

While using the likert scale for the follow up questionnaire is a sufficient way to quantify the participants perception, the data cannot be generalized to the small scale of participants. The scale should only be used to frame the details given in the semi-structured interviews. While this study does add to the body of research about trans voices, there is still a limited amount of knowledge of the topic, which can hinder how this study was conducted. In this process of gathering data, I initially thought that my personal connections might give more insight into the detailed experiences of the people I knew. While I took care to not abuse that connection for the sake of the study, it actually had the opposite results. The participants I knew personally were less likely to share stories and anecdotes in detail for the interview because I had already heard many of those experiences on a personal level. Even when asked to elaborate, the participants I did know would not go into specific anecdotes that they had shared with me personally during my time knowing them. The participant I did not know personally shared the most detailed anecdotal accounts with me that lent valuable perspective. Due to the discoveries concerning the impact of intersectional identifiers, I would recommend that future research also investigate more BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of color) as well as investigating how socio-economic privilege plays a role in how trans femmes use their voices. I would also recommend using both semi-structured interviews as well as focus groups to investigate how marginalized groups of people verbally interact with each other.

Final Remarks

I have a greater understanding of how to approach trans femme voices in the studio with care and more understanding of how misogyny silences femme voices. In investigating these accounts of young trans femmes' lives, we must consider the impact of the gender binary on voices in voice pedagogy. Classifying voices inhibits them from expanding to their fullest potential. We must also continue to recognize the societal expectations of a femme voice and the misogyny that subjects trans voices to violence. There is so much to explore on how systems of oppression literally silence the voice physically and theoretically. The voice is a tool to assert authority within spaces, and it is imperative we use our voices to sing a song of advocacy for all voices, especially those discriminated against and silenced.

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20 August 2024

Dear UWTSD,
RE: How does previous psychological distress and trauma impact transgender femme AMAB (assigned male at birth) voices undergoing Hormone Replacement Therapy?

I confirm that I approve of the research proposed into “Impact of psychological stress on trans femme amab voices on HRT” to be carried out by Jillian Carelli during interviews with participants between September 2024- January 2025.

Kind Regards,

Jae Carelli

Participant A:

As we are beginning. So, I know that you took a look at the consent forms and everything you can retract your participation at any time without penalty. There is complete confidentiality as stated in the form. And potential risks to any participants could include psychological risks associated with talking or hearing about sensitive topics. So, there are resources if you feel like there is anything upsetting to you that you can get professional help with. And I will send those to you to whatever best form of communication is best for you. Absolutely. I understand. Okay. So, there are two hotlines, Trans Lifeline and Trans New York that I will send you the phone numbers and websites for. Great. So, thank you so much for taking the time to do this. And I received all of your information from the survey. So, thank you so much.

Would you be able to tell me about how you perceive your voice?

Absolutely. Absolutely. I would say I definitely perceive it as definitely being on the deeper side. I feel like the manner in which I speak does have a more masculine intent to it. Just because I was, you know, raised and socialized as a man. And so, it's something that's very unconscious that I don't particularly think about. But I do oftentimes recognize that cis women have a different cadence of speech than I do.

Absolutely. Absolutely. Would you mind going into more detail about, you know, the cadence and everything? I know that you started work with the Seattle Voice Lab.

I did. I did. But I only did one lesson. But still. Yes. So, the person I was working with at the Seattle Voice Lab, her primary note was just to get in more words in a single breath than I normally do. Something with, like, stopping a sound in the throat, I think. Yeah. So, my perception, at least, is that the voices of cisgendered women happen to be a lot more breathy than my particular voice.

Absolutely. Okay. And aside from gender, how do you perceive just your voice as a physical mechanism?

I don't have anything against it, really. I mean, I think I don't personally, like, mind my voice. Even when I'm hearing it in recordings, I'm like, it's not a bad-sounding voice. So, I mean, as it relates to my own perception of my voice, I recognize that it may not be stereotypically feminine, but I don't hate it, personally.

And also talking about perception, how do you perceive your identity? Like, what does identity mean to you?

That's an incredibly complicated and nuanced question. Of course. I think, in the most simplistic way possible, you know, I identify as a transgender woman. I was born male, and I take, you

know, female secondary sex hormones to produce secondary sex characteristics. Female secondary sex characteristics. That being said, I mean, I think the more I transitioned, and, you know, I worked so hard to be so feminine and be perceived as a woman, that I think as time has gone on, I've cared less. Because I think how we define femininity and how we define masculinity, how we define gender, is really in the eye of the beholder. There's no one set way to exist as a woman in the world.

Definitely. Absolutely. Thank you for your insights. What is the role that your voice plays in your everyday life?

Oh, my God. So, obviously, you know, you use it as a vehicle for communication. It's how you communicate with the outside world, the people in the outside world. I think when I pursued treatment with the Seattle Voice Lab, my main complaint was, like, I don't have an issue with my voice. But oftentimes, other people do have an issue with my voice, just because I do present so feminine. And oftentimes, like, what gives me away, quote, unquote, is being transgender, is they hear my voice. And then, you know, some people are taken aback. And unfortunately, some people react less than ideally. Um, I think there's a whole separate sub conversation there of how we treat women in our society, as to why that is. But I think, yeah, to answer your question, you know, what is it like in everyday life? Can be difficult at times.

Absolutely. Absolutely. So, you've been on HRT for quite, I think, 18 months?

18 months, yeah. Yeah, like a year and a half.

A year and a half. What is your perception of your voice before and now currently, before you began HRT and now as it is currently?

There's been no change. No change? Yeah. Have you, um, have you perceived your voice any differently? I think I'm more mindful of it now. I'm more mindful now, the way that it sounds. Just, I think before transition, I could very easily get away with presenting very androgynously and people, but people would understand that I was assigned male at birth. And that was kind of, from their first perception of me, quite obvious. Now it's not so obvious. And so I feel like my voice is oftentimes now what sets me apart from cisgendered women. You know, that's like the one kind of obvious tell that I am transgender.

Um, yeah. I see. I see. So before you started and after, you don't feel any, you don't sense any type of difference. You don't feel anything specifically.

I don't think there's been any like, noticeable change in like the timbre or the cadence of my voice.

Um, so also, um, as we talk about the role of voice, it's not just, um, like as a physical mechanism, how do you feel, um, about utilizing your voice, not only just like verbally to

communicate, um, but also like in a social sense, like the role of voice that one has, um, within society, within groups of people, within either on places like the internet.

That's an interesting question. And I'm not sure that I completely understand it. Do you think there's a different way you could like, ask the question?

Yeah. How do you feel like you use your voice, not in a physical sense, but also in, um, a sense of like social voice, um, whether it be in different mechanisms to, um, communicate. Um, so like, I would say, let me give an example for example, it could be like, um, um, sharing your opinion on the internet or something of that sort, or, um,

So we're not talking necessarily about physically my voice, but more so how I like to advocate for myself. Yes. Um, or just advocating in general, not even advocating, but just communicating.

Okay. I mean, I guess talking like about like one's like internal voice.

Yes. I mean, it's important. Um, I'm just not sure how to adequately answer this particular question. Um, yeah, I mean, obviously our voice is what we use to communicate, to make connections, whether or not it's us physically using our voice. Um, it's how we can, for lack of better terms, justify our existence to the world around us. Um, you know, just saying like, Hey, I'm here. I have thoughts. I have opinions. I have my own lived experience. Um, so I hope that's not too much of a bullshit answer. So you mean like, kind of like asserting your presence? Absolutely. Taking up space.

Absolutely. Absolutely. And, um, I know that, um, you do, uh, like a lot of, um, like reading with gender theory and all of that. How do you feel like, um, like social voice and everything plays a role in that type of, um, communication?

Right. Right. It does play a role. Um, I'm not sure. I'm not sure. Honestly. Okay. Yeah. Just curious. I'm sorry. No, don't be sorry at all. Um, so also, um, as you very well know, as a trans person, there is just like obviously systems of oppression that, um, you know, just exist in this world, especially for trans and queer people.

How have you, um, felt like your experiences undergoing that, um, and experiencing, um, these unjust systems of oppression, um, on a personal level, on, um, just like a systemic level, how have they impacted, um, how have they impacted you, first of all?

I mean, I think when we're talking about, you know, the systemic oppression of trans people, of women, you know, they're all tied into one another. Um, for me, it's been, you know, frankly, harrowing. Like I've had numerous negative experiences, either based on the fact that I am transgender and they were able to ascertain that and that made them upset. Oftentimes, because they were already attracted to me, and now they don't want to justify that attraction to themselves, but they do want to put the blame on me for being provocative, for being a sexual

creature. I've been told that my body's pornographic multiple, multiple times. And at the, you know, root of it, that is just misogyny. But because I'm trans, you have that extra flavor, you have that extra twist of, you know, it becomes trans misogyny. So, you know, like, in the most direct way, I was obviously prior to transition, you know, a feminist, I believed in the equal, in the equality of the sexes. It was hard for me to understand the scope of what misogyny, systemic misogyny means in this society, until after I started developing those secondary sex characteristics, you know, hips, breasts, so on and so forth, that I realized, you know, the absolute severity of it, because it is quite severe. And, you know, it's been a harrowing experience for me. It's definitely had, you know, severe impacts on my mental health. I've definitely at times become very withdrawn, lost interest in making new connections, communicating with people. I feel like prior to transition, I was a very kind of affable, kind person. And now I feel that I'm much more cynical to a degree. Because a lot of the assumptions when I'm creating new connections with people is that part of the reason that they approached me in the first place is because they are sexually attracted to me, and that they're objectifying me, just how my body's developed, and my pretty face. But it's definitely, it's been, you know, rather severe.

Absolutely. And has your experience shaped the way that you perceive yourself?

Absolutely. Absolutely. Yeah. I mean, I have, you know, been called like a slut, a whore, a bop, a new term the kids have out. A bop? Yes. I don't know if I can curse on the audio recording. Yes, you can. It stands for blown out pussy. People have called me that twice this week, for like wearing a tank top in public. And I'm like, y'all, I don't even have a pussy. I'm so sorry. But I think there are degrees of struggling to internalize those things, because, you know, no matter what I wore when I was masculine presenting, no one ever said things like that to me, because men aren't held to the same standards. And so I've oftentimes been like, well, maybe I did deserve to be treated that way. Maybe I shouldn't have dressed like that. Maybe I should have made more of an effort to cover up my body. Or, you know, like, for example, like Carlin, where a recent hairdresser gave me a really, really terrible haircut. And she asked me out on a date during the haircut. And it's hard to not believe that the reason she gave me a terrible haircut was because I rejected her, because I said no to the date. And, you know, I like went home, had this terrible haircut. And I was like, well, maybe I was flirting, which I think when I was masculine presenting was never a question that I would have asked myself. So yes.

Yeah, absolutely. I'm so sorry.

We've just been through everything. I think everyone goes through it. Well, every fem presenting person.

I am still sorry. You don't deserve that. So as you felt the shift in your identity based on how people have been perceiving and then therefore treating you accordingly to their misogynistic ways, right? How have you felt that has impacted your voice on a physical level?

I am definitely less reserved when it comes to using my voice, especially if it's a stranger in

public. If I can get away with physical communication, that's always going to be my first step, because the majority of times people hear my voice and they might be taken aback for a second, but they, you know, adjust their worldview really quickly. And they're fine with it. But there are definitely situations in which people do react very negatively to that. And so unless I know this person or it's someone that I interact with on a daily basis, I'm very hesitant to use my voice because that will, you know, solidly give me away as a trans woman. So, yeah, I mean, obviously that has impacts as well. Like, you know, people think that I people who approach me in public and sometimes who justified sometimes they're not think that I'm being arrogant or that I'm being rude because I'm very taciturn. And that wasn't really feedback that I had received in the past because I was just happy to go ahead and talk to people. But unless I absolutely need to use my voice in public, it's something that I generally try to avoid just for safety reasons.

Absolutely. How do you feel like your experiences have shaped how you feel like utilizing your voice not necessarily like on a physical, utilitarian, communicative level day to day, but in sharing how you feel?

Absolutely. I mean, I think it's something that I thought about before. When you physically withhold your voice, there's also an internalized shift inside of you. And I feel, you know, prior like versus like prior to me transitioning, even internally, much more taciturn, like I'm less likely to speak out about anything at any time, like even I'm not really on the internet like that, but like, I can't imagine me like writing internet comments and like giving my opinion on things because I am just so used to not saying anything, which I don't think I was always like that. But I think, yeah, when you're so restrictive and like so restrictive and hesitant about using your physical voice, it does create changes in how you use it, you know, internally and in other situations as well.

What about your creative voice? Do you feel like the experiences that you've had have shaped the way you use your creative voice?

Yeah, I don't really use that anymore, either. Because that even to an extent, feels like an extension of my physical voice. So I'm much less likely to write music, to write poems, things that I have done in the past. We have a piano in my apartment. So I think the most I typically do is play other people's music on piano. But still, that is in a way, utilizing some type of creative voice. That's true. That's just a flex on the Juilliard girl I live with. My piano skills are better than hers. In a way, do you think that flex is a way of asserting, it's a way of communicating and asserting your skills? It is. It is. I mean, we talk a lot, me and the Juilliard girl talk about musicality. So I think I often play piano for her just because she's not particularly skilled with that instrument. She always gives me praise, and she always praises my musicality. So yeah, I would agree to that statement.

Absolutely. Do you feel like in that situation, it's because you are asserting your creative voice, you're creating a connection and receiving just kind of affirmation from your roommate, and with that connection is the result of you utilizing your creative voice and playing the piano?

Yeah. Yeah. I mean, I think I could agree with that statement. Yeah. Absolutely.

Absolutely. Is there anything else that you want to add about this topic of how you live in the world, how you perceive yourself, your gender identity, the role of your voice?

Not that I can really think of, no.

Okay. Yeah. Okay, cool. Well, thank you so much for your time.

Of course. Yeah, it was my pleasure.

And yeah, if there's anything else that you think to add, you can always just reach out if there are any other thoughts that you have on the matter.

Yeah. Absolutely.

Well, thank you.

Participant B:

So you may back out of this interview or participating in this study at any time. Thank you so much for agreeing to this interview and also if we're going to be talking about some stressful and or traumatic things that have occurred to you and you have experienced so if you at any time need to step away from this interview you are more than free to do so. I also have resources as well that you can contact in case if you feel like you need to get mental health help after recalling these incidents. Is that okay with you?

Great thank you so much. Is it recording?

Yes I'm recording on audio.

I was like wait the zoom thing didn't say like, meeting recording.

Yeah it'll get lost somewhere on my computer and I'll never find it again. So you know how do you perceive your voice?

Like what do you mean?

Alright so maybe let's start here what's your perception of your identity?

Like as a whole in terms of gender, in terms of socioeconomic status, in terms of where I am in my life right now, in terms of my career like All of it?

All of it.

Meh.

Meh?

It's pretty meh. It's a blob of meh. Because it's just a mess. Okay.

Okay. Would you mind starting with you know, what your name is, how old you are, anything like that? Which will not be used.

Alright. Uh. Named —----. 26. uh. 26. I hate saying that. Old. Um. Um. She, her pronouns. Transitioning since. When did I officially start? Twenty. Mm. Twenty nine. Late 2019. Early 2020. So it's been. About. And it's about five. Or entering the fifth. Like just finishing up that. Or entering the fifth year.

Yeah. You're gonna enter the fifth year.

Yeah. Yeah. And. The start date. A little soft but like. Um. I can't remember what I ate. Breakfast two days ago. Let alone what I did four years ago. Oh absolutely. It's a void. That time's a void. Mm. So um. So you.

What is identity to you?

To me. Is everything that Makes up who you are. Um in terms of like. Background. Genet like race. Um. Gender sexuality. Um. Socioeconomic status. Um. Uh. Like where you're like. Where you were born. Versus where you grew up. Um like. Where you like it's I guess. Like as you get older like. What you if you what you decide to do. With your life in terms of like career. Or school like that formulates. Um like. Spirituality slash religious. Background. Um. Like physical. Traits such as like. Um. Your how tall you are. Your facial structure. Your like physical. Attributes or traits. Yeah. Kind of just like all one giant. Thing into one is like identity. Definitely.

Absolutely. Um so back to the. Initial question how do you perceive. Like what do you. Imagine your voice to be. What do you how do you perceive. Your voice.

Um. I perceive it to be just this. Thing that I make. I don't know I don't really perceive my voice. Because I try not to perceive my voice. Because I hate my voice. I see. Do you want to elaborate more on your feelings. Around your voice. Yeah just like. I thought. Um. I guess like. Hearing my voice record. Like when I hear my voice. Like on a recording or something. It doesn't sound what it sounds like in my head. And also just doesn't feel the same. As. I don't know the temperament of the. Just sounds different. So I guess I don't really know. What I really sound like and that's like. I just don't really like that. Because it's just like. A. Thing that I don't know. If I'll ever be able to fix. If that makes sense. In terms of like what do you feel. Like needs to be fixed. Well fix my perception. Of like how like. How like it feels when I speak. As what it sounds like. When I hear it's back. The disconnect. Between that I just. It's just like a weird sensory experience. And I just don't like it.

Absolutely. That makes a lot of sense. Coming from like a music voice. Audio background. The reason for that is our skull. Adds extra like bass. So we perceive it different. Our voice differently. So when you're recording. It picks it up. But also on a recording. Like on your phone. It'll be really compressed. So it won't necessarily. Be accurate either. You would need to get like. A decent condenser mic. And then EQ things. Somewhat properly. To get a good recording. So if you'd ever be interested. I can do that for you. And you know. Hearing your voice on a recording. Is definitely jarring. And I know it's a common experience. For lots of people.

Absolutely.

How do you utilize your voice? Like in your daily life. I know. Your career is. You work as an EMT. You're also you know. Taking a hiatus from studying. But you're a med student. How do you utilize. Your voice in your daily life.

Honestly right now. All I do is. Interact with coworkers and patients. Outside of that. I really just. Don't do much. Talking. I mean I kind of live at work. So I guess like. Talking to coworkers and stuff. I don't do much. What I do mostly anyway. Are my patients. But like. I don't really do like anything. Spectacular. I don't know. Just like. Just general communication. With people. Out of just like. Pleasure. Or force to. Do to work. Absolutely. That makes. Sense.

You've been on HRT now. For almost five. Years.

HRT started. A little after the start of transition because I had psychotherapy first.

Oh okay. I see, definitely.

So let's say like. Consistently for. Four and. Maybe a quarter to a half. I see. I think. Yeah four. It's been about. Probably about. Four almost four and a half years. Okay. What have you. Have you felt a shift. In the way that you perceive your voice. No. No. Not really. Well. Overall no. Except. I just my voice will break more often. I see. Um. And. So like it's just like. It's just like. I guess like overall like. It feels the same. Except that it breaks more often. And like. I'm more likely to. Like. Feel vocal strain. I see. When if I have to like be loud. Yeah. Yeah that would make sense. Um. But other than that like. The way I hear it in my head. The way I think I sound. The way I feel like it comes. The way it like feels talking. Feels the same. I just have like. Yeah. I don't know. Like vocal. Breaks in vocal performance. Either like feels a feeling of strain. Or like. And then just like not being able to like project. Or like. Just breaking which I guess like. With my job I have to like. Project or speak loud a lot so. It's when we're. Draining on voice.

Definitely. That would make sense. What about your Job do you have to Oftentimes raise the volume of your voice as you're working?

Yeah. Yeah just cause it's like. Usually they're like. Like I don't work in most quiet. Of environments so. There's usually a lot of background noise and stuff. So it's just like you have to talk louder. Or you know work with a lot of like. Elderly so they're harder of hearing. So you have to talk louder. So it's a lot of just like. Being very loud and very like. Or like you have to just like. Be louder and like. Clear to like. Be heard. Definitely. Especially since you work in a lot of. Emergency situations. Yeah.

Do you feel the Heightened Stress of the situations In which you work Often will result In more use and strain Of the voice?

Um. Use. Not necessarily. I guess necessarily. I mean. Like. I guess in terms of like. Professions on a whole. I do communicate with people. I think verbally more than most. Professions. Is like a constant need. There's not like. There's kind of no way around that. But I guess in terms of like. Professions. Where like communicating with people. Verbally is like a. Guarantee. It's not necessarily. I don't feel like it. Is more than that. Um but. Strain yes. It's just due to like.

Depending on the day. Like sometimes it's just like. There's just a lot of. Pieces a lot of noise. A lot of stuff you have to like. Be heard over. So you have to talk louder. Definitely.

Definitely definitely. That would make sense. Um. We all know. Uh that. Trans people. Um. Have. How have you experienced. Either. As an individual. Yourself or. Just like. On a systemic level. How have you experienced. Either stressful or traumatic. Situations. Um. And what is your perception. Of those.

What do you mean by. Your perception.

Like any stressful. Or traumatic experience. It doesn't have to be related to being. Trans but it can be.

Um. Let's see. I mean. Therapy.. And just like. Ignore the shit out of it. I see so avoidance. And working through these things in therapy. Yeah. Would you be open to. For the sake of the study. Speaking about. Any events or any types. Or just like even just. Broad descriptions of things. In particular. Of like events that are. Things that have happened. Yeah like for instance. Someone could have like called you. Slurs in this instance you can. You can just like list things or. Or you can go into. You can go into detail about specific events. Whatever is you know. Whatever is more preferable. Right. I mean like. What hasn't. Happened. I guess. I guess like it's more like. Thinking of like what's happened. It's like it's more like what hasn't. Happened yeah absolutely. Because it's just like. I've been called slurs. Yes have I been like face. Racial discrimination or. Other types of discrimination. Yes have I had. People get physically. Violent because of it. Yes have I have been. Assaulted because of it. Yes have I been. Let's see. Like. Have I been denied. Yes have I been denied. I've been treated differently because of it. Yes have I been treated differently. In a negative way because of it. Yes have I. Felt. Unsafe or. Unwelcome in spaces because of it. Yes. Let's see. Let's see. Let's see. Trying to think of anything else. I think I cover all the big ones. Absolutely. So with all of these. Varied and unjust incidents

I'm. So sorry. That you've, you know, experienced these.

I'm over it. Kind of used to it at this point.

Absolutely. How have you felt like. These incidents. Have impacted the way you. Perceive your voice or use your voice.

Um. Honestly hasn't. Like in general. I know my voice isn't the most. Feminine sounding. So like I get. Clocked because of it sometimes. But like. I don't know. I don't really care enough. I don't really. Care enough. To like. Change anything. Or also just like don't really care enough. To like be like. Yeah. Gonna do like. Let this. I don't know just. Just kind of people. So like. I put too much effort or thought into it. Because it's just going to make my life more miserable. So just ignore this. I'll just ignore and do. My own thing because it's easier.

Definitely. Have you. Have you felt like these stressful. And psychologically. Traumatic experiences. Shaped the way. How you. Not only use your voice. Physically but also. Use your voice like in a social sense. Like on a social. Like level. Like in society. Either in terms. Of like activism. Or like on a different scale. Like the internet. Or like asserting. Your opinion.

Are we talking about voice. In a theoretical sense. Or voices like the physical voice.

In a theoretical sense.

Oh. Are we talking about voice. In a theoretical sense this entire time.

We're talking about both. Actually so. It's pretty open ended. So it's kind of where we go. As long as we touch upon both.

Okay. I was just making sure I didn't like. Confuse. Their questions. So far. I mean. Sorry. I got sidetracked. What was the question again?

How do you feel. Like. These events. Have impacted. The way you use your voice. In a theoretical sense.

Um. Like. I mean definitely like. Advocacy. And just like. The need. To find community. Among other people. And just like. Connecting with them. Is pretty much like. A big thing. Or also just like. Like supporting younger. Trans kids. Through theirs. Because like. They don't necessarily. Deal with this as much. Or like are in a position. To like. Necessarily like. Expect that this is going to happen yet. So just like. Helping them process or deal with it. If it does happen or like. Know that it might happen. Um. And also. I guess like in just general. In just like. In like. Social settings. Or anything. I don't know like. Out of my way. If not being obnoxious about it. Like all the time. Like if. Conversation appropriate yes. But like I'm not like. Trying to steer every conversation. I ever ever in it. To cover that kind of stuff. Because I mean that's just. Like advocacy or like. Stuff like that. I mean that's just physically. Emotionally exhausting. It's just not. And then most. I mean just like using it like. Using my physical voice. In like situations or something. Like physical for personal situations. I don't know it's just like. Those situations. Or like issues in the past. Like and I don't know. Doesn't really affect anything. Doesn't really change anything. I just kind of like ignore it. Because like I don't know. People suck. And people will continue to suck. And there's no stopping the sucky. So then like. I don't know it's just easier to. Ignore than it is to. Have to like. Deal with it. Like just mentally. Just constantly deal with every incidents. Because if I have to. Consciously process every single. Time it happened I'd be like. I would never get anything else done. Absolutely. It's just like you know. It's just every. You just kind of have to. Ignore it.

Definitely.

It's just. Honestly just. Too much effort to not. Like it just would require. Too much effort to not. To not ignore every single incident. It's just. Like at work and life. It's just like. It's just not worth it. It's just. Situation of recovery I guess. Yeah sure. But also like. At the end of the day. It's just more effort. That I'm willing to expend on things. That are at the end of the day. Don't really affect me in the long run. Like yeah cool. People say shit. People say stuff all the time. Excuse my language on an interview. It's okay. So it's like whatever. Like. If I had to like. Like is it a minor annoyance? Yes but like it just. Like. It's like I guess my equivalent of it. Is it's like. It's like every instance. It's like you getting a grain of sand. In your shoe. Like. For the most part you could ignore it. I mean. If you have a lot at one time. Then it's just like. Becomes an ignorable. So then you have to address it. Yeah it's just there. You kind of notice it sometimes. But it's just like just kind of sits there. But eventually just. You get home you take your shoe off. The sand falls out. And then it's just next day starts. And it's just not there. And it's just like not an issue anymore. Or like it will sometimes just work its way out. And so it's like it's just not really. A conscious problem that you deal with everything. So it's like whatever. Versus if it was like. Yeah I mean when you get. Like if someone put a handful of sand in your shoe. It's going to be ignoring. Annoying and you're going to notice it. And you have to address it at that point. Because it's like an acute thing. But like in general. A single grain of sand isn't going to do anything. So like. Why am I going to address it every single time it happens. Because it's like. Oh I got a grain of sand in my shoe. But I'm walking near a beach. It's like it's going to happen. So if I stop to take off. My shoe every single time. I got a grain of sand in it. I'd probably just end up. With more sand in my shoe. Because I'd have to stop. Take it off. Probably get sand in my sock. Addressing it every time. And at that point. If I did every single time. I wouldn't get anywhere. If I wait till like. If I have to address it. Sure I'll address it. But if it's just minor. And there's no need to address it. What's the point of wasting my time. My effort. My. Like. Physical and emotional. State. To address something. That in the long run. Is just a minor. Grain of sand. Or also on the flip side. It's probably not going to change anything. It's like what's the point of like. Addressing every little minor inconvenience. Because it's most likely going to. Honestly sometimes. Just causes more problems.

Absolutely. Do you feel like. Do you feel like you know. Treating these incidents. Like with the analogy. That you were expressing. Do you feel like that. Approach has had any impact. On the way you use your voice. Physically or theoretically.

Physically no. I mean. For the most part no. Like. If you're standing in a room full of. People who you know are going to be. Aggressive to you. You just kind of just. If like you know like. Just an arguably unsafe place. Yeah a little bit. But I feel like that's. Like the natural like. No like if you change how you. Present in a space. That you know is 100% unsafe. Like it's. If you know you're in an unsafe place. You don't just. Carry on like nothing's. Everything's fine. There's nothing to worry about. You know you're in an unsafe place. So that you treat it like an unsafe place. In terms of. Theoretically I mean. I mean yeah. I mean I'm not. I don't think I'm like. I'm not the person to jump down. Someone's throat every single time. I get misgendered or. I'm not the person to just like. Have to cause like. A physical alter or like. Physical or verbal altercation. Every single time someone says. Something like. Hurtful or bad. I'm like it's just like. It's. I mean

it's like not. I'm not one to do it. If it's only directed at me. Cause at. The end of the day. I'm not. It's not worth my time. My effort. My like. Using my voice. To fight every single time. If it's just me. If it's not just me. Yeah. I'm gonna address it like it's just. It's not. Cause at that point. I just. Don't have. I mean if I just don't have the physical time. Or the effort every day to expend. Addressing every single situation. And if it's just me. It's like it's worth the time or effort. Cause if I do it again. I'd be wasting most of my time. Trying to deal with this shit every time. So it's just not worth it. It's just. Why waste time. If you don't have to. It's just like it's. Work and stuff is already exhausting enough. Without having to deal with this. Every single time it comes up. So yeah. Pick and choose your battles. If it's appropriate to do so. You do it. If it's not appropriate. You ignore it. Discernment of where and how to use your voice. Is definitely important.

Absolutely. Is there anything else. You would like to add. On this subject. From your own experience. Also as your profession. In healthcare. What about utilizing your voice. Within your. Practice of healthcare. And not just. In a theoretical sense.

Not in a what sense?

In a theoretical sense.

Not in a theoretical sense. Not in a theoretical sense. It doesn't really change anything. In a theoretical sense. I'm in healthcare. There's no place. In a healthcare setting. Directly. Outside of. Working as a healthcare professional. Advocating for. Patient groups or. Minority. That's a place. There's no race. There's no politics. You're there to. Do best by your patient. Regardless of their views. If I. It's not my job. To change a patient's opinion on something. It's not my job. To judge my patient. Based off their life choices. Or background or anything like that. It's not my job. To try to make patients. Change their behavior. If it's deemed inappropriate. If they're being like. Aggressive or something. You're going to tell them to stop. It's just like. You don't have to deal with that. It's not my job. To actively try. To change a patient's opinion. I'm there as a medical professional. I have to remain neutral. Whether I agree with their opinions. That's not my job. That's not my place. You have to treat everyone equally. If at the end of the day. I'm there to. Help people. My job is to help people. And potentially. Help save their life. Or improve their physical health. Not to. Question their beliefs. Not to question. Their ideologies. Not to try to change their voice. Or ideologies. If I want to. Outside of work. Advocate for those certain ideologies. Or against certain ideologies. That is fine. But inside of us. Inside of an active patient setting. It's not my place or job. It is very unprofessional to do so.

I think maybe. A better question would have been. I know that you do. You have done a lot of research. And I know that's something. That you want to continue. In the future.

My research is very unrelated. To my voice. Any sort of active voice. For any ideologies. Or belief systems. Or identity based things. My voice is very strictly scientific. My research is very straight up. Scientific. Microbio based. Medicine based. Has nothing to do with. Any sort of. Ideologies. Or identity based things. It is strictly straight up science. The two don't overlap. At all. Right. Absolutely. Just curious. The type of research. I do. There is really no overlap. To

anything. Including. Trans care. There is no overlap. To the two of them. In my. Professional. Career. The active. Academia portion. There is no overlap. The two don't affect each other. Directly. There is no overlap.

I was just wondering. You have a masters in public health.

No, I don't have a masters in public health. I have a masters in biomedical science. I dropped the public health. To pursue a concentration. In microbiology. And. Virology. And cancer cells. I decided to do more. Deaf research on the one side. Instead of doing the two old bastards.

Thank you for that clarification. Is there anything else. That you would want to add. On anything that we talked about today.

Not really. Is there anything else? That you feel like. You wish to state. For the sake of the study.

Not particularly.

Okay. Great. Well thank you so much. For your time. And everything.

Participant C:

So just in case, you know, we're going to be talking about, and you may be recalling some things that might have been stressful or distressing to you. So if you feel like you need any mental health help services, I can send some links to you. And if you feel like you need to stop participating at any time, that's no problem at all, you have to do what's best for you.

Okay, yeah, that sounds great. Thank you so much.

Fantastic. Well, okay. Amazing. So, yes, I see that you just responded to the Google form. Perfect, perfect, perfect.

And thank you again, so much for being able to reschedule from the previous interview that we had set. I was staying at the coast for a couple days. And there was like a big wind thing that knocked out the power.

Yeah, absolutely. Yeah, I'm so sorry to hear that. That's always like so stressful to have like, weather induced obstacles. So I'm glad that you know, you're safe and the power is back.

Fantastic. Um, so alright, let me just pull up these questions. So first question is, you can just share how you identify and what you perceive your identity to be. If you wouldn't mind sharing a little bit.

Yeah, I identify as non binary. And I use they them pronouns. And I don't, I just don't really connect with the concept of gender itself, especially within the bounds of our society. Because there's so many expectations socially, that correspond to people's assumptions, usually based on biological sex of what we're going to be able to do, what we as individuals like, the things that we're going to pursue the career paths that are available to us. Um, and it really just makes me feel super wiggly when, when I'm referred to as a man, because I just don't feel like I connect with the principles of what being a man is.

Absolutely, absolutely. So for you identity, fitting within that perceive within that prescribed gender binary that society puts on you, you're just not participating within it.

Um, yeah, absolutely.

How do you feel? Like your, your like, your voice has to do with your identity? Like, how do you perceive your voice?

I try not to, I try not to stress about it. Because if I think too hard about how I'm perceiving my voice, then I start to think about how other people perceive it. And then I get anxious, because

then it's like, how are these people perceiving me? And then if I'm anxious about how other people are perceiving me, then I'm not going to express myself how I want to because then I'm worried about all of this judgment. Um, I remember when I hit puberty in late middle school, and my voice dropped in like a day, like one day it was up, and then one day it was down. And that was a really weird day for me. Um, so um, sometimes I wish my voice was higher. I've tried to do voice training before. And it just didn't really click with me. I was never really able to get a consistent routine. And I also realized that the pitch of my voice doesn't really matter to who I am as a person. And that then again, connects with kind of the gender binary and our society's expectations of this person's voice is going to sound like this. So I've tried to detach myself from the perception of my voice in relation to gender, because it's my voice, and I'm a person and I have a voice. What about outside of gender? How do you perceive your voice either on a physiological level, on a theoretical level, even? Can you maybe ask that question in a different way? Yeah, definitely. I'm trying. I feel like that's just difficult to answer. Totally. So you know, we have a larynx, larynx, all that good stuff, you know, the anatomy of the voice. Here, maybe let's start here. Sorry, I'm not a professionally trained vocalist or anything.

Absolutely. Yeah, totally. How do you utilize your voice in your daily life?

Um, usually, to speak with people, to vocalize, sometimes to match pitch. I would say that also like singing a melody and then entering it into like Ableton. It's kind of like a starting point for musical ideas, I guess. But usually I'm using my voice as a tool for communication.

Definitely. So you're also a music producer, too? Yeah, and I also play the saxophone. And because I play the baritone saxophone, my vocal range actually aligns really well with my instrument, so I can sing my parts in the correct pitch.

That's really cool. That's really neat. So you find yourself often utilizing your voice for mostly communication and also for your creative voice as well.

So with I also, yeah, sorry, I also, um, write like rap music sometimes too. So that's like a vocal thing as well.

Definitely. That's so cool. How do you find that as you are using your voice? How do you, what's your relationship with your voice outside of gender, just as you are utilizing it? Do you have any feelings towards your voice, your creative voice? You know, your voice as, you know, in like expressing your opinion, expressing your thoughts and feelings, like in that theoretical sense, or even like your voice as you communicate with others and share things that, you know, and communicate information? What's your relationship with your voice like in those aspects?

I think my metaphorical artistic voice is very, very different from my speaking voice. Like those are two very separate things for me. Because I don't think I would ever be able to actually speak with words, the like, my voice in my head, I guess artistically. Um, there's a whole wall of sound

in there. And this is just one thing. Um, I guess I feel like my voice sounds weird when I'm speaking. And I try not to think about it sounding weird. Um, I used to hate listening to my voice in recordings. And that was something that I had to unlearn. Um, my artistic voice, though, is not a voice, it's like, just sound. I don't know if that makes sense. But like, if I'm producing music, I'm trying to imagine all of the different sounds that I could be having happen at the same time. And usually none of those involve the sound of my voice, I guess. Sometimes I will sample it though. And I can turn it into an instrument but I don't, I don't know. Yeah, you don't use your voice like in that musical sense as a primary form of creating music. That makes total sense. It's very secondary. Totally, totally. Do you feel like you're like the act of you creating something though is like, in a way like your musical voice. It's not like literally using your voice, but you're taking something and you're communicating something with the skills and utilities that you have. Yeah, music is a language. And I would agree that, in a way, like creatively making music that is a type of voice that I'm using. Absolutely, absolutely. Even if it's not like, traditional vocal, like, it's still a voice for sure.

Okay, definitely. So looking at what you had put on the Google form, you've been on and off HRT. How have you felt like that has impacted how your voice feels or how you perceive your voice?

When I went on HRT for the first time, I felt really, really strongly about wanting to be feminine. Like I felt like that was kind of an escape. And I really wanted my voice to be more feminine. Um, because I have a lower pitch voice. Like, I can really get down there. But there's like a whole fluidity of vocal range that's accessible to everyone. Um, but it's a lot of work to retrain your voice to sound a different way. Um, and when I stopped HRT for the first time, um, I'd been on it for about a year. And it was really, really, I think, confusing for me, because I felt like I didn't fit in. And I thought that that would make me feel like I fit in. And it made me feel like when I was on HRT for the first time when I was on estrogen, like, it made me feel more like myself, but it didn't make me feel like I fit in with society more. Um, and I think that the disconnect between those gender expectations and my personal feelings relating to that didn't improve until I actually tackled the root cause, which was my own insecurities. Um, relating to my voice, I've been going on estrogen, the second time, most recently, like, three months ago, um, has not really impacted my voice because I'm not self conscious about it in the way that I used to be. I used to like doing exercises where I would like to try and raise my Adam's apple. Um, that's not gonna go in the audio recording, but I'm assuming that you would like to see that. Um, and like, if you raise this up here, then it does that like the format changes, right? Um, and I used to try and do that and try to get a higher pitched voice because I wanted other people to perceive me in a more feminine way. Um, and it was related to other people's perceptions. And, like, I used to have a food service job. Um, and that was like, I had that food service job the entire time that I was on estrogen for that first year. And I would practice my fem voice when I was taking orders. Um, and like, but it was all, I guess it did make me feel better at the time to try and speak in different ways, but it was mostly related to other people's perceptions of me and not how I actually felt. Because what I personally want out of my voice, I mean, I'm like, I'm a function over form

person, and I want to be able to effectively communicate and get my ideas across. And unfortunately, if I walk into a room of professors, and I'm like, Hello, I'm Orion. And today, I'll be doing my jury on baritone saxophone, they're gonna look at me differently than if I walk in and go, Hey, I'm Orion, and I will be performing, like a blank piece, like, it's different. It sets the room differently, because people judge you differently. And so I found myself code switching a lot. And that is also stressful, because I don't want to have to do that. I just want to be a person. And I want to be me. And anyway, I'm kind of going on a tangent. Please, please go on a tangent about this. This is actually really insightful. And yeah, so if you want to express more, please. Do you have any direct questions about anything that I've said?

Um, if you still have some stuff, there's some things percolating in my mind, but you can keep going on what you were saying.

Okay, I think that what I was getting at is that depending on how people speak, people get perceived differently. And another thing also is that when I was on estrogen for the first time for that first stretch of time, the longer I was on it, the more I realized how people were treating me differently. And it was like, I could see my like, quote unquote male privilege going away. And voice is a really big thing for that. Because a deeper voice gets perceived as more masculine, people pay more attention to you when you're speaking, people give you more respect. Um, I've had situations where, um, like, I've been walking, I don't even look like that. Like, I just look like a person. Um, most people use they/ them for me in Portland, and I don't really have to do anything because I feel like I fit that demographic. Um, but one time it was like nighttime and I was walking through downtown and someone came up on a lime scooter. And like, I think that it was like some dude that I've never seen before. And he was like, you look like you got pronouns in a really derogatory way. And if I responded to that, and I was like, yeah, I prefer they / them. Um, then I probably don't know, that would have been dangerous. And if I'm like, the fuck you looking at, bro, then the dude's gonna walk away, or I guess in that case, a scooter away. Um, and so depending on what voice I'm using, people respond differently. And that can be associated with safety. Um, and one of the reasons that I stopped estrogen in the first place was because I felt like I was losing that sense of comfort and safety that masculinity had provided me, even though it wasn't an authentic feeling towards my experience. I was scared of the judgment of other people and the way that that was going to impact my life.

Absolutely. Do you mind if you're open to sharing why you decided to go back on HRT?

Yeah, I couldn't stop thinking about it, you know, I would go to sleep. And at nighttime, when I'm trying to go to sleep, it would be like, just the what if would never leave my mind. It would always come back. And I feel like over a period of one, two years, like, yeah, about two years, maybe a little over two years. Um, because I stopped in the summer of 2022. And I started again, just after the summer of 2024. And now it's winter. Um, so yeah, during those two years that I wasn't on estrogen, I did a lot of thinking. And if there's just something that's in the back of my mind that isn't going away. It just sits up and builds. And I felt like if I didn't go back on HRT, then the

question would never leave my mind because I would always be thinking, what if I did that? Um, and then I thought, why am I not doing that? And it all boils down to what is going to make me the happiest in the long term. And it doesn't, like, I don't have to tell people about my medical history. When I went on HRT for the first time, I made like a cutesy little Instagram post on my close friend's story. Like I was like, if you know, you know, I posted a photo of the pill bottle. Like I was, I was more social about it. But right now, I'm not. And it's really liberating because I'm living my life. And I don't have to tell people that to people. And so it takes away some of the anxiety, I can just let my body do its thing, live my life. And then at the same time, also have this hormonal balance that makes me feel happier. Um, so I, I think I went back on HRT because I had finally done enough processing to realize that that was what was going to make me the happiest in the long term.

That's really amazing that you know, you were able to sit with it and process things and still make the choice that is best for you in the long run. I'm so happy to hear that.

Thank you. And I think part of that is also realizing that if I ever stop it for some reason, that's fine to do. I'm not stuck in this one lane of existence. Um, this is what I want right now. And what I have, I think internally wanted for the past couple of years. Um, if not, since puberty, since like middle school, um, why deny myself of that, if that's what I truly think is right. It's like when people get a tattoo, they're going to have that for the rest of their life. And tattoo shops are everywhere. Why are these hormones such a big deal? Exactly.

Yeah, absolutely.

I have a couple of dumb tattoos and I don't regret it. Like they're there and they're fun. Most definitely. And I chose to get them done.

Yeah, absolutely. Do you feel like, um, you know, now that you have resumed HRT, have you felt like impacting you on a psychological level, like how you, um, just like how you think and perceive, um, like, you know, your environment around you?

I mean, part of it now is just that I'm not worrying about it. I'm not like waking up and looking in the mirror and being like, oh, I look so masculine. What if I could do something? What if I was on the, it's like those what ifs don't exist anymore because I'm living the what if. And so I'm just living my life. And that's a really beautiful thing. I think, um, I feel more stable right now than I felt when I was not on HRT, um, because I'm not questioning my decisions so much. I'm just trusting the process.

Totally. That's amazing. So as you know, though, I know you were talking earlier about, um, oftentimes like issues of and as you know, it's just a reality. Um, trans folk and queer people are often not just marginalized, but they are discriminated against. There's like violence, safety issues. Um, how have, um, you know, as much as you feel comfortable talking about how have,

um, like those types of experiences shown up in, um, just like your life and your experience?

Luckily, I haven't been marginalized too much. Um, I'm really lucky to have a great role model of an older sibling. Um, who showed me that even when you're in a challenging field, you can still express your true self. Um, and luckily I'm not in a challenging field. Like I'm not an engineer or something like that. I'm not in politics. I imagine that would be really hard for a trans person right now. Um, sorry, could you ask the question again?

Yeah, absolutely. Um, have you ever felt like, Oh, go on.

Oh, just that I have ADHD and I'm only this far through my espresso.

Okay. No, same here. I have ADHD, so I'm always all over the place. Um, yeah. So, uh, have you felt like any of these, um, experiences? Um, you know, I know you're talking about, you know, your older sibling, um, and see the ADHD. Gosh. Um, have you experienced like any form of, uh, just like stressful experiences that, um, just like in general in life, um, just even outside of, um, being trans, do you have any, um, like, you know, any stressful, distressing experiences that impacted you psychologically on some level?

Lots, definitely lots. Um, there have been, I mean, luckily they are very spread out and are not necessarily like physically harmful experiences, just things that stuck with me mentally. Um, uh, like two years ago, one year ago, something like that. I was in an urban environmental issues class and there was a teacher who, and I've been identifying as non-binary, like using they, them pronouns and stuff since like I was a senior in high school. Um, it was during COVID. So like, it wasn't really a big deal. And then when I went to college, everything was fine because I go to Portland state university. So like everyone's chill about it most of the time, but I was taking this environment, urban environmental issues class. And the teacher was a second wave feminist. I'm pretty sure like really good readings, a really difficult class. Um, clearly a very passionate individual, but she was really bad about the gender stuff. Um, and so she would divide our class discussion groups by her perception of what our biological sex was. And she would like, like, I don't even know if it was necessarily on purpose. That's just the way that it was. And it felt like it was on purpose. And she would address the class, like, all right, boys and girls, she wouldn't use my pronouns. And a lot of the time I just take a deep breath and drop it because it's not worth it. Like if I'm only meeting someone once or twice, I'm not going to be, or if someone's older, like if their intentions are good, I really am intention over like what happens type of person. I give a lot of leniency to like my father, for example, because it's a big thing for him even to acknowledge these queer identities. And so the fact that he's acknowledging them some of the time is really big anyways. Um, I think it really depends situationally, but she, I asked her very kindly to please use gender neutral terms when referring to the class. Because I didn't really want to be put into the box of all right, boys and girls, let's have discussion. Um, why not? All right, class, let's have this like, it's really not that hard. And she sent me this big email that was flat out blaming the fact that I'm queer on how I was raised and on my parents saying that I'll never understand the

experience of what it feels like to be a woman, which I'm not even trying to understand. That's not my goal. Um, it was just really not a respectful email. And so I ended up having to contact her supervisor, and like, discuss and call and, and do all of this formal process. Um, just because she was not being respectful in the slightest. And it was just really, really, really stressful to go through. And it affected my academic performance for the entire term. And it affected the entire class. Nobody wanted to participate. It was silent the whole class because they all knew what was going on. And no one wanted to have like, a conflict, people reached out to me and they were like, Hey, are you okay? Like, the day after, like the class after I corrected her very nicely about the gendered pronoun thing. She restructured the entire lesson plan to just be about gender and the differences between the male and the female experience. Um, I did not show up because I wasn't gonna show up to class after she sent me that email. But, um, I heard from other students in the class that it was really whack. And then she made the class discuss like, like, like she split the class up very intentionally and made them discuss. I was not the only, I know there was at least one student in that class that was not me that used they, she pronouns, like not she, they, but they, she in that order. Um, like I was not the only queer person in that class. And it, it was just really whack because how does that relate to urban environmental issues? Like race is a really big thing when you discuss urban environmental issues, but nobody was like redlining male and female houses. Like it was just hysterical and it like, it was really whack. Um, I would say that that is a form of marginalization. Um, but it only happens because I was trying to speak up for my identity.

I see. Wow. I'm so sorry. That is such to have someone who's supposed to be a teacher and who's supposed to be nurturing a learning environment, be so hostile and aggressive. And I'm really sorry you had to deal with that. That's so distressing and B that shouldn't be happening in any form of academic environment, gosh, or at all. But, you know, especially in a place that's supposed to foster the learning of all people.

And especially from a teacher that I could have learned so much from someone who's clearly very passionate about a very important issue. She was an adjunct. I felt really bad because I didn't want her to lose her job. But at the same time, I was like, why are you sending me these whack emails? And then it puts me in a position where I have to make these decisions, not just based on what's best for me, but what's best for the institution, what's best for other students. How much do I want to press this issue? Because like, if that teacher gets fired, then who else is going to teach this urban environmental issues class? Are people going to learn these important concepts? Um, and is she going to have a house to live in? Because she's an adjunct who doesn't have a car and is like 70. Like, like, it's just, it's, it's a hard position to be in that I don't think I should have to necessarily be in as a student. Um, another example of, I don't know if marginalization is the right word, maybe discrimination. When I was on estrogen for the first time and working at my food service job, I was probably like 10 months into hormone therapy. And right now I'm just on estradiol monotherapy. But back then I was on Spiro and estradiol. So like my T was super low, my E was pretty high and a lot of physical changes had started occurring. And so I was having a somewhat visible chest. Like I was having something that if I was wearing

a tight shirt, someone could notice. But it wasn't super crazy. But the head chef of the like breakfast cook side of the food service place that I was working at, cause it was a pretty big kitchen. I was like walking up to him to ask him for something and we were talking and he squeezed my chest just like randomly. And I was like, the fuck? And he was like, oh, I thought you had something in your pocket. Cause it was like a shirt with like, it was like a button up or something with pockets. And that is one reason that I stopped estrogen for the first time. Cause I didn't want that to happen again. And I had associated those two things in my brain cause like femininity and discrimination are kind of connected. And at the time I wasn't trying to just be me. I was trying to be more feminine. And then I got sexually assaulted at work. And so there's an example right there. And then more recently, this is, I think the, this is an example that is way more recent. So I just finished up the fall term of my senior year at Portland State. I'm gonna need an extra term. So theoretically I have one full academic year of college ahead of me. And my saxophone instructor last year accepted a position at a different college. And so there's a new saxophone instructor and he's really great. He's really nice. He's having us do quartet. He's taking us to NASA in Idaho, which is like a saxophone conference we're gonna perform. It's gonna be great. He's already gotten us multiple performance opportunities. We did a Christmas thing in Canby, like a great guy. He's got a young kid. His wife is the jazz voice director at Portland State. So like, and I work for, this is a complicated situation because I am also a paid student employee of the school doing audio visual work in the recital hall and in various performance spaces around Lincoln Hall in Portland State. So I'm running audio for my saxophone teacher's wife's ensembles and working with my saxophone teacher's wife. I can't have a conflict of interest because I need to do my job and I don't wanna hold any negative emotions in my brain while I'm trying to do a good job of mixing someone's performance. This connects to my saxophone teacher, who is terrible at remembering my pronouns. At the start of the year, I was introducing myself and it turned out we'd already met at my old saxophone teacher's going away party. Was going great. He seemed like he was a pretty good down to earth guy and the saxophone lessons were going great throughout the term. Quartet was going great. Studio class was going great. But the one thing is that he just would not remember my pronouns. And I talked to him about it a couple of times. I exposed some vulnerability because he seemed interested in the queer experience. So I was like, hey, I would really appreciate it if you didn't use gendered terms when referring to me. You can just use my name if you can't remember the pronouns. Just call me Orion. Just replace all the pronouns with just Orion. Cause I know that works for some people. And over the course of the whole term, like that's a pretty substantial amount of time. We had like five or six saxophone lessons and I was seeing him every single week for quartet and every single week for studio class and like running into him around the hall. So like, it's not like I wasn't seeing him frequently. Like if I was only seeing him once a week, if I was only seeing him like twice a term or he was teaching a large ensemble class with a ton of other people, I would give him way more grace. And I wouldn't feel so personal about this because there would be a reasonable excuse. But in this specific circumstance, he would very frequently say positive things about me. He'd be like, yeah,---, you're one of my favorite students. I talk about you all the time. Like, Orion, yeah, that guy's great. He's such a good saxophone. Oh, ooh, I'm sorry. You know, like I would look at him and

then he'd realize, and then he'd give me an apology. That was like, and it put, I was like, why are you giving me this big apology instead of correcting yourself and moving on? I don't need a big apology. It just makes it worse. I don't wanna hear about it. I don't wanna think about it when I'm in my saxophone lesson. I wanna think about the music. And I had two conversations with him about it where I, the first one, I was just telling him that I would really appreciate it if he would use gender neutral terms when referring to me. And the second time we had just gotten dinner with another saxophonist after a performance, I was walking him to his car because I had to drop something off at the music building. And we were talking and he told me that he and his wife tease each other when they're talking about me and they get my pronouns wrong. And like, it was some like thing to be made fun of, I guess. I just had this vivid image of him and his wife going like, oh, you messed up their pronoun. Oh, you messed up his pronouns. Sorry, there. Oh, you messed up the pronoun. And like in bed, like just playfully romantically teasing each other about pronouns. And that was the least academic thought that I could have had. And it really made me feel like I didn't want to interact with either of them. And I was like, I really have to make a decision because I need to keep working for the school. I don't need to keep taking saxophone lessons. So I had to make the decision to not take saxophone lessons for this upcoming term because the final straw was after that conversation, I was like, hey, can you please just like, all I want is to be focused on the music. I don't want to be thinking about my gender identity in a saxophone lesson. I wanna be thinking about the saxophone. And I told him that after he told me that him and his wife were like playfully making fun of like my identity, I guess. And he was really receptive. I was really hopeful. And then we had our last lesson of the year and we were reading jazz duets and I was like, okay, can I count this off? And he said, yes, sir. And I looked at him and I was like, dude. And he was like, I'm tired. It's been a long day. And I was like, I'm gonna cut the lesson off here. I said that to him after we had tried reading the duet and I just couldn't read it because I wasn't, like I thought I could tough it out. And it's weird how that stuff distracts you. Like, or at least it distracts me more than I would like it to. It distracts me enough that I'm on hormonal replacement therapy. And it distracts me enough that if my teacher is not able in a one-on-one setting, if my teacher is not able to remember to do something as simple, at least as simple to me as using a gender neutral term, I mean, he could have just said yes or like, okay. Like he didn't have to say yes, sir. And I get that everyone is coming from a different place, but that was a really, really difficult thing because I feel like a lot of people won't understand this situation. But for me personally, it's a very stressful thing because I have to decide whether I wanna keep spending my student fees, taking lessons from this educator that I could learn a lot from, and then keep being stressed about my gender identity and then be mad when I'm at work running audio for his wife. Or I can just detach myself from the situation as much as possible. Keep participating in quartet, keep participating in the studio class, but just not do lessons. And then the chance that I get mad is much lessened, but also I'm taking away an educational opportunity for myself. And that was really a difficult decision for me to make.

I'm so sorry. So- Yeah, go on.

That is- Again, I'm not sure if that is marginalization or discrimination or whatever, but that's the

most recent example that I can share.

No, it is. This is supposed to be an educational environment and you're there to learn and your educators are not giving you an environment in which you can learn in. And I'm really sorry. That is so difficult, especially with your studio teacher. You have a very close relationship with any studio teacher that you have one-on-one private lessons with. Like that, it's like the responsibility for them. It's so great, especially for students in any type of program, undergrad, graduate, it's like these students really rely on you for a lot of knowledge and insight and guidance. And you deserve a space where you are recognized and you are feeling safe because being told and being just like, just so callously being told that, not just your teacher, but your teacher's wife who you work for and work with is being so callous that is not any place where anyone would feel safe. I'm really sorry that you experienced that. Do you feel like these situations, I know you were expressing before, like how when you spoke up at that teacher in your urban environments class and you advocated for yourself, you definitely received not a great reaction from her. And same here, it's like, now your creative voice is being stifled because of people's unwillingness to see you for who you are and make efforts and good faith to show that their intentions are aligned with their actions, which they're not. How do you feel like these events have impacted the way you use your voice?

Yeah. I guess I've been shown a pattern where if I speak up, then sometimes people will talk down. The experiences that I went through the first time that I was on HRT did show me that the more femininely I present myself, almost like the less seriously people will take me. And I think that is a reason that I don't really voice train. And I think that's one of the reasons because I know that people aren't going to perceive me the way that I perceive myself. And I'm okay with that. I've thought about that and processed that. And so if I'm in this happy medium, I guess I can like be myself, but also still feel like people are respecting me because I wanna feel like I'm respected. But at the same time, no matter what my voice sounds like, if I'm trying to speak up and advocate for my queer identity, there is going to be a conflict at some point. And it's hard not to feel like I'm the one creating the conflict because I'm really trying my hardest to be as respectful as I can when I'm dealing with these situations, acknowledging people's background, giving people grace. I don't expect people who are unfamiliar with pronouns or whatever to get it immediately, especially if they're a little bit older in age. But also I, as an employee of Portland State University, remember that you have to go through like one of those mandatory online diversity training where they're like, here's queer stuff. Like I went, I had to fill out the online Canvas course too. And it makes me wonder if my saxophone teacher had to do that. Relating to my voice, it makes me not want to use a higher pitched voice or a more feminine voice because it feels like I won't be taken seriously at all. And so if I still held, like if I still had this belief that I needed to have a higher pitched voice because I'm on HRT and I'm trans femme, then I think it would be much harder for me right now because maybe it would be easier because if I had a higher voice, maybe people would perceive me more femininely and then use a gender neutral pronoun because they're not seeing me as much as a man. But at the same time, that's me changing myself for what I think other people's perceptions will benefit from. And I don't want to

have to do that.

Absolutely. Do you find in situations outside of your physiological voice, do you find that these events that you've experienced have made you less likely to use, I mean, in some ways, like you've talked about like your creative voice, like you had to make that decision about your studio, which is absolutely so unfair and I'm sorry that you had to make that decision. Do you feel like you are almost more inclined, less inclined to use your voice creatively in like a social sense and like an advocacy sense, even if it's just voicing your opinion, not even like with your physical voice, but just sharing how you feel? Do you feel like you are open to communicating as you were before these events or do you find yourself, these events influencing how likely you are to share your thoughts, opinions, expressions?

It makes me feel a little bit more like I have to be careful with my words and with the battles that I choose to fight. I'm very grateful to have supportive friends and mostly supportive family and people that don't make me think about my identity in that way. I'm very lucky to have a supportive community. And so my artistic voice, I don't really feel like I have to compromise because of my gender identity. When I'm performing on the saxophone, it doesn't matter what pronouns people use for me. It's just, the music is what matters and unless someone is gendering me like on a microphone, like introducing the band, you don't have to use a pronoun when you're, who uses that? It's like, this is Joe on keys and this is Brett on bass and this is —---- on saxophone. You don't have to use a pronoun for that. And so when I'm performing, my voice doesn't change based on what's going on because I'm just trying to do the best that I can. When I'm creating music, if I'm feeling really queer, I might make more queer music. And if I've gone through an experience that makes me feel like I've been marginalized, I might make a darker song that is expressing those emotions. But I'm very lucky that in the community of artists that I'm a part of, I don't feel like I have to change my artistic voice to accomplish that. But I do feel like I have to sometimes conform to the boundaries of the art itself because I'm afraid of maybe looking stupid. And sometimes I'll scroll through Instagram reels and I'll see a trans girl who's making rap music in a fem voice that doesn't necessarily clock as a fab female voice, but it's still a very feminine voice. And that person will have to delete lots of comments or just have their comments filled with bigots because online that supportive community does not present itself in the same way a lot of the time. And so if I look at that, that definitely is like an attack on artists' abilities to use their voice. Because if someone's making rap music and they're all up here and they're like, hey, yeah, like people perceive that differently. And I guess I have sacrificed that range of my voice when I'm making specific types of music because I'm afraid of people perceiving it a certain way. But it doesn't really make me feel like I'm sacrificing my identity because at the end of the day, I'm still making the art that I want to. If I'm making music in a different style, like hyper-pop, for example, I can use that part of my voice and it sounds like it's supposed to and it'll reach the community that it's supposed to if I target it and put it out there. So I guess I do feel like I have to conform sometimes to certain stylistical boundaries of music, which does limit my voice in a certain way, but it doesn't make me feel limited as an artist because I can still cross these genre bounds. I don't know what I would do if 100 Gecs didn't exist though, because I think they kind of

broke the glass for a lot of people as far as trans femme voices in music. Laura Less is a massive icon and she made people open to hearing that. And so I'm very lucky for that. I think it would be really difficult if the music scene didn't already have so many genres where a trans person can succeed in creating it because I think I would have a hard time being the one that's doing the advocating because it's a really difficult battle. And I'm very lucky again that in my own life, I don't have to deal with it a ton. I still have to deal with it, but it's not something that really impacts me so much that it makes me feel like I'm in a box.

I see. Absolutely. I'm so glad that you feel like there's so many different outlets for you to continue creating in. I would love to check out some of your music.

Thank you. I have a lot of stuff that's unreleased and I'm working on a lot of stuff. I try not to take myself too seriously again also. And I think that another thing that's really important as far as art and our artistic voices is just making the art for the happiness of it and for the joy of music and not necessarily for other people's enjoyment. That's something that I've really focused on while developing myself as an artist because I want to make music for other people's enjoyment and I wanna make music that's more commercial. But to do that first, I have to figure out what little silly songs make me the happiest so that I can then do both of those things at the same time. If I was trying to make music that I thought was commercial, I don't think it would turn out as good because it wouldn't be as authentic to my expression. *Absolutely.*

And that's why I have so many unreleased songs that are just on my computer because I made them for me and I sent them to my friends over Discord who I make music with sometimes. And I was like, well, look at this song that I made. And they're either like, whoa, that's great or whoa, that's terrible. But if it's terrible, it's still funny. And also trying to make bad music on purpose is also really funny. And that has made me feel a lot less self-conscious about my artistic voice because trying to make something bad on purpose is a skill just as trying to make something good on purpose is. I don't have any skills related to that cross between good and bad. Like a technique that makes a song sound really, really bad could be really fun for sound design than creating a song that you can use in a creative way that sounds good. Absolutely. So there's a lot of different sonic possibilities with that. But yeah, I try to just make the art because I want to and not because of any other reason.

Absolutely. Absolutely. You have such a beautiful artistic voice and the way that you express your art and your music. So thank you so much for sharing all of this with me and for the study. Is there anything else that you'd want to add on this topic of voice?

I think that for really popular musicians who have to deal with the stress of that, it's probably a lot more difficult for all of this stuff because they're under so much judgment and so much criticism from the public. Like Chapell Roan, for example, is someone who went from being not very famous to everyone knowing the lyrics to the song. And so for someone like that, who's having more of a boundary pushing expression, then I would imagine that it's very, very difficult to make

those decisions artistically because it's like, what are the listeners wanna listen to? How do I maintain this popularity? How do I do all of this stuff? I would imagine it's very easy to get lost in the sauce if someone is in more of a Southern or rural area and they don't have as supportive of a community. Maybe they feel like they won't be able to express their inner artistic voice in the same way. And so I think that my experience is unique in the sense that I have grown up in a place where the majority of my experiences have been positive or neutral related to queerness. And a lot of people have a lot of negative experiences before they reach the positive ones. And I only have a couple, like a handful. I'm sure if I really thought about it, I could draw a lot of examples, but I don't need to. And it doesn't really get in my brain in that way. So I just wanna say that I'm very lucky to have the people in my life that I have and to have the time to think about this stuff.

Absolutely. It's so important to have community and at least in knowing your sibling—--, who's just a wonderful person, musician. For, I've known —--for what? Six, seven years? Yeah. So definitely, I'm really glad to hear that you have them and other people in your community to support you. That's so important. And time to process absolutely is so important as well. But thank you so much for taking the time to participate in this little interview. I will keep you updated as the study goes on and you'll absolutely be able to see. And if you just need to communicate with me at any point, you have my email and stuff. So please don't hesitate to reach out.

And yeah, I really appreciate you taking the time to do this. Thank you so much. Thank you. And thank you for your reminders and persistence because this is a really hectic time of year and I really am happy to be able to participate in this study. And so, yeah, thank you so much for the grace that you provided in scheduling.

Oh yeah, no problem. I'm always pretty flexible. So yeah, thank you so much for making the time. So I really appreciate it. And yeah, I would love to follow all of your artistic pursuits and everything. So I wanna support you in your music. So yeah, thank you so much. Yeah, please tell —-I say hello. And yeah, I wish you a wonderful holiday season and a wonderful new year.

Likewise, and I hope that the rest of the study goes really well. And I would love to be kept in the know about like what happens.

You betcha, definitely. thank you so much. It's been a pleasure to get to talk to you.

Participant D:

But yeah, so if at any point in time during this interview, you know, you'll be recalling stressful experiences. So if you feel the need to stop, you can drop out and not participate without any consequence. And I will also send you some mental health resources as well in case you need them.

Cool. Yeah.

Fantastic. All right. So first question, especially as we're talking about identity, what do you perceive identity to be?

Identity is at once what you were born with. So like your race, your, I mean, that's also socially prescribed obviously, but you know, like your race and the place you grew up, things you can't control. And then there are things within your control, such as, yeah, your identity journey, like where you've been and what you've learned and like how you challenge what you grew up with. But yeah, that's kind of how it, what I think forms identity. But I guess the definition is how you see yourself and how you think, yeah, the inner self that you see in yourself and want to present to others. Absolutely.

How do you identify? My labels, as I jokingly call them, are non-binary, pansexual, Vietnamese, American.
Musician, I guess, if you want to add queer to that too.

Oh, absolutely. So what is your perception of voice?

A thing we use to communicate, I guess musically it's an instrument that we use to, yeah, another instrument in the arsenal. Yeah, we'll leave it at that.

Okay, how do you perceive your voice?

I'm trying not to be a joke. I'm trying not to make jokes the whole entire interview. Yeah. My voice is one of my many instruments. It's also the most fraught one, I would say, because it changes over time. And then like, also it's related to a lot of, yeah, like, yeah, a lot of emotional weight from previous trauma and previous experiences that have made me think my voice doesn't matter. Yeah, I don't know if that answers the question.

No, it actually does. Actually, you're totally, yeah, I'm gonna rearrange some of these questions. Would you like to expand upon that more?

Yeah, I mean, it has to do a lot with, well, one half of that is the Asian-American identity, with the

identity, because, you know, living in America, Asians are affected by the model minority myth, which is a construct that pits Asian people against other people of color, specifically black people, by making them into the model minority, which is a stereotype for Asians being the best minority, the ones that come to this country and do it right, quote unquote. And they do it right by being docile and agreeable and, yeah, like putting their heads down and working, which is what my parents did. They always tell me to, like, they always are, within the career I've chosen, which is being a musician and, like, also being an artist, I am a very vocal person. And to them, they don't understand that because they were told by media, by their parents, by everyone, to, like, put your head down and not make waves, yeah, to make a life in this country that's sustainable and, like, you can survive and, like, achieve that American dream. So there's that half, and then there's also the trans half, which is, yeah, like, when I was younger, when I was, like, ashamed of my femininity, it was a source of shame because I have a higher voice and, like, a quote unquote gay voice, you know, like, whatever that fucking means, right? But, you know, the inflection of, like, Yas Queen or whatever. Yeah, and that was a complicated relationship because, yeah, I wanted to fit in more and be seen as desirable and someone you could, like, and, like, be with. But it was something that, yeah, it brought me shame that I couldn't be, like, the other boys or whatever. And then now that I'm trans, I'm, like, okay, now it's another layer because now I'm, like, okay, I have some dysphoria of my voice because I hate how low it is. So, like, those are the two, that's, like, the trans part of that, like. It's not quite where I want it either, but that's how, yeah, I mean, that's the transitionary part of the journey for me. It's, like, okay, like, can I learn to love my voice as it is at the moment even if it's not quite what I envisioned for myself? But, yeah, we'll pause there and then maybe you should, yeah, we'll pause there for now. Those are all the thoughts I have at the moment.

Okay, we'll circle back. So how do you use your voice in your daily life? Like, what's the role of your voice?

In my personal life, it is my tool for expression and to communicate. It's how I, like, talk to people, obviously. And then, more broadly, it's how I express myself, whether it be through singing or talking. So, like, expressing my emotions and feelings through singing. And it could also be, yeah, so yeah, especially through primarily singing is, like, the primary mode of emotional expression, I would say, at the moment. And then, can you remind me of the wording of the question again, actually?

Yeah, how do you utilize your voice in your daily life? Even also in a theoretical sense, too. How do I use my voice?

I mean, it's, yeah, it's the way I, I just use it mainly to communicate in remotes. We'll leave it at that. And then perhaps you can dig in more to get where you need to go.

Totally. In a theoretical sense, like, what do you perceive voice to be? Like, in terms of, like, political voice, social voice, in terms of, like, activism.

Okay. In that sense, it's my way of carrying on the stories of my people. So, my people is a very broad term, but, like, yeah, in my case, like, yeah, Vietnamese-American diaspora is one voice I carry on. And then queer people is another voice I carry, and trans people specifically. So, yeah, that's, like, the main political tool, is, like, making sure, like, in this time, and especially this time period, that our stories are not erased, and are not muted by the forces that seek to get rid of us and, like, make us invisible. Like, that's a very big role of our voice. Yeah. We'll leave it at that for a moment.

Absolutely. So, asserting your presence.

Yeah, asserting our existence, more than just presence, like, just pure existence. Pure existence. Because, yeah. In the year of 2025, there are many forces that seek to erase trans people. And relating back to the Asian-American, that one's sort of obvious, because the rhetoric. But also Asian-American people, too. I was talking to someone about how, for whatever reason, like, the Asian-American identity has been divorced, I would say, from its political roots. So, I think to be Asian-American is also to be vocal in our story, yes. And, like, the story of our diaspora, and the story of that. But also the story of, like, how Asian people are in solidarity of other people of color, in the struggle for justice and equity in the United States of America. So, it's also carrying on that tradition, as well. That being Asian also means being in solidarity with other people of color. Like, specifically, like, black folks.

Absolutely. Definitely. So, you've been on HRT for a few months now, right? Yes. What was your perception of your voice before and now, as you're currently on it? Have you noticed any difference? Have you perceived your voice differently? Have you felt anything physically?

So, for HRT, with M2F, specifically, it's actually a weird one, because it doesn't change your voice. So, a lot of the voice changing to feminize your voice happens through vocal training. So, like, speaking up here. So, I don't, in terms of, like, physical changes, nothing's really changed for my voice. I think it's more of a perception thing. And, yeah, with the overall trans journey, being on HRT has allowed me to chill out a bit, for lack of a better word. Because, like, estrogen is running through my veins, I just feel less pressure to perform femininity, like I did at the beginning of my non-binary journey. So, expanding upon that, like, yeah, at the beginning, I felt like I had to be femme to be perceived as non-binary. Like, I had to dress, like, wear dresses, and talk higher, and do all this shit. But now that I'm, like, further along in my trans journey, and, like, taking HRT, it's allowed me to be like, okay, it's fine if I, like, talk low, like this. Like, it's not that deep. Like, I am non-binary, not only by, like, my perception of myself, which is, you know, one important part, but also because, like, I'm on hormones, and, like, I don't have to worry about, like, being perceived as femme, because I'm on the journey to being more feminine. So.

Absolutely. Has this, this has, can you go more into how this has influenced how you perceive yourself and your identity?

With, like, HRT? Yeah. Yeah, it's just made me more relaxed in my trans-ness. Yeah, it's made me more solid in it, knowing that, like, I'm doing something actively to address my gender dysphoria. So. Yeah, that would be the main thing. It's just a sense of, for lack of a better word, stability in my identity. And, like, I guess the fraught thing of that is, like, yeah, obviously I've been trans and will be trans no matter, like, what meds I'm on, or, like, how I perceive, yeah, like, versus how others perceive me. But yeah, it is a treatment for that that helps a lot. Because I get to, yeah, be trans in a very concrete way. It's definitely. Anyway, does that make sense?

Yes, it does. So, I mean, as you were just talking about as well, you know, trans people, people of color, like marginalized communities have been subject to oppression and violence and trauma throughout the systems in which we exist in currently. Are there any that come to mind that relate to you being a trans person here in the present day that you would like to share for this interview?

I mean, the constant trauma of being told you don't exist and you're fucking crazy is the main one. Especially now, like, politically. Like, everyone's like, we're gonna erase transgenderism. Like, it's not a fucking ism, it's a fucking group of people, you know? That would be probably the main trauma. And then obviously, like, the little trauma of like, having to constantly explain yourself to other people and like, fight for you, fight for your identity to be validated by your loved ones. Because that's part of transition. And I think a necessary one, but like, for lack of a better word, like, hard launching your identity is quite difficult. Because yeah, you have people who love you and like, have seen you a certain way. And obviously, you want to be loved by them. But they have to make that transition for themselves. To like, see you as you see yourself. That takes time, that's not like a, it's not like an instant thing that people can see you as your trans self.

Definitely. Are there any specific instances or anecdotal stories that you'd like to share about that?

Yeah, I think like, the main, I mean, there's the main one being like, yeah, when you come out, for lack of a better word, like, the hardest thing is for your loved one, like, more than like my parents, actually, because my parents, like, yeah, I kind of, I accept I'll kind of never understand being trans in a meaningful way. Because yeah, they're old, old fashioned. But yeah, with like, my friends, like, like, getting them to get my pronouns right was such a hard thing, especially like, my close friends and like, the people I work with. Because yeah, they are used to that. They're used to seeing Tony as like a “he”. So that was a really hard transition. Like, there's no like, because it's such a small anecdote, right? It's like, oh, like, someone gets your pronouns right, like your friend of fucking five, like up to like 10 years or five years or two years, one year, like, in that transitionary period, like, gets your pronouns wrong. And then you have to correct them over and over again. And then there's that whole like, dance in your head of like, do I correct them? Do I not? Like, is it worth it in this moment to correct this stranger at a party? Is it worth it in this moment to like, assert my identity? Am I not a trans person if I don't assert my identity? Like, if I

don't correct them, am I still trans? Am I still non-binary if I just like, accept my assigned gender at birth? Like, that whole go around happens. Even to this day right now, like, for me, like, it's definitely chilled out. But like, yeah, it is a dance that every, I think like in, yeah, every trans person goes through every single day at some point. And that itself is very, like, it's just like a mental, another mental load that we go through that other people don't because of the way society is constructed and how gender has been made to be a binary. And a very, like a quote unquote biological binary, which it's not, but there's no, like, one story because I think making it a narrative doesn't serve the everyday struggles that trans people go through. Because it's not like one big thing that people go through. It is like the culmination of all these different microaggressions that people have to deal with on an everyday basis that really wears people down. The metaphor my other non-binary person gave me was like, every day, like, you get like life points to deal with all this shit. And at some point you just like run out and you're like, fuck, this is so hard. Like, why am I, why is it like this? And then at that point, you're like, that's why people, a lot of people detransition, right? It's like, I hate going through this feeling every day. You know? So, that makes sense.

Yes, definitely. Have you ever experienced just like blatant discrimination or like, just like blatant discrimination or even violence because of how you identify?

Other than like, hate-filled, like, epitaphs in the street, not like violence, violence. And not like discrimination. Yeah, because I am privileged in my work. I work in theater primarily and like music. I'm sort of very like, relatively like open-minded, at least on the surface, people. So, yeah, I think I'm very lucky in that. My career choices are, yeah, help support my identity, I should say.

Absolutely. Have you felt like these experiences, these microaggressions have impacted how, how your voice functions?

I think this goes back to like, the perception thing of other people. There is a pressure to, yeah, especially like with my current identity, like non-binary, like how I identify at this very moment. Like, there is a pressure to like, play up the feminine side of my voice. To like, yeah, again, to make clear that, oh, I am not on the binary. I'm not a boy. Like, see me for who I am, motherfucker. You know, but when in like, in actuality, my experience with gender is a lot more fluid than that. Like, I am both feminine and masculine. Like, both exist within me, and both are valid parts of me. But because of, yeah, like the way society is a binary, and like how I want to be perceived as like, not on that, I play up the feminine parts of me. Yeah, like a very clear example right now is like, I'm debating using all pronouns, because that's closer to my gender experience, but I hesitate to do so because at that point, like cis people would just use my assigned gender at birth pronoun, like he. And I don't want that. That doesn't feel good for a cis person to call me he. Even if like, that's closer to my experience, like someday like, I, yeah, I would probably be okay if using he, or she, or they, right? But because of like, how society works, and like how I want to be seen within society, like I feel pressured to use they and them pronouns, because that's, that like asserts my non-binary-ness. So, yeah. In terms of my voice, yeah, it makes me

like, wanna talk higher. Even if like, I actually don't care that much, like where my voice sits. Like, my voice is my voice. Like, it's just what I have been given. So.

Absolutely. Yeah. Absolutely. Do you find that, also not just how your voice functions, but do you feel more or less apt to use your voice due to these experiences?

Well, like, do I feel like, do these experiences make me feel like I'm a, I guess like a, for me, like I'm a, I never shut the fuck up. Like, I'm an outspoken person, so it doesn't really affect how I use my voice, I guess. Like, I'm gonna talk no matter what. But it does make me more aware of how I'm perceived, right? Which again, it's that cognitive load I was talking about that all trans people go through. Every trans person has that moment of like, are they perceiving me in the way I want to be? I see. So when you think about other people's perception of you, how does your voice play into how other people, how you want other people to perceive you? So with trans people, I don't care. And the queer people are my friends, to be honest. My voice is my voice and that's it. But when I'm out in the world and want to be seen in my identity by strangers, I have a different voice, which I had before, to be honest, even when I identified as a cis man. It's that customer service voice to be friendly. But now it serves a different purpose of, yeah, like my voice gets higher to be perceived as more femme. That's a role that I play when I'm out in the world for survival, because I want to be seen as more not on the binary.

Interesting. It's interesting. Some of the other participants I've spoken with have actually said that if their voice is perceived as more femme, they're subject to more discrimination and misogyny. So that's really interesting that when you have your voice perceived as more femme, you feel like it's for your survival and to be seen.

I don't know what the race of your other participants are, but I do think being Asian plays into that because I think there's already a feminization of Asian people and an infantilization of Asian people. So I think it actually kind of goes in a non-productive way, because I play into this cutesy Asian stereotype, which, like I said, in some ways, is my favorite because they don't care if I have a high voice because it's cutesy and fun. But in other ways, it plays into stereotypes of Asian people being cute and demure and subservient. I think that's why I get away with it more. I see. Because people perceive me as this cute Asian person, which is derived from the situation of Asian women. So I don't know what the race of your other, again, I don't know what the race of your other folks in your study are, but I think that definitely plays a part of why I have, in some ways, a privilege to be more femme because I get the privilege of playing into the stereotype of being a cute little Asian person.

That's very interesting. Yeah, that makes a lot of sense that you note that. How have, how do you plan on utilizing your voice, like in a theoretical sense, like in a social sense? I know you do a lot of research on this. In a theoretical sense, I know you do a lot of advocacy and, you know, you're an incredible artist and songwriter with a very strong artistic voice. Like, what are your goals for, you know, your voice in a theoretical sense?

To be honest, I'm in transition with that as well because, like, actually, I think my speaking voice is gonna be more important, my orator voice, than my singing voice because, like, I feel like, yeah, with my music, I am kind of in a place of, do I wanna continue being a music artist and, like, doing that thing? So I think more importantly, like, my advocacy for trans rights and telling my story rather than, like, singing my story will be more important in the future. But I don't see it as, like, do you repeat the phrase? I have a question. I think I need to, like, clarify for myself what I'm gonna answer. How do you plan on using your voice, either in a theoretical sense, a social sense, a political sense, things other than just, like, the physical utilization of your voice? Yeah, I mean, I think it's just, like, never, yeah, it's not staying silent in the face of our oppression, in the face of the oppression of others. And not staying silent is, like, yeah, there's, like, the big, like, grand gesture shit of, like, speaking out, like, of, like, speaking out, writing a song, going to a rally, speaking at a rally, talking to a bunch of cis people about being trans at, like, a talk or et cetera. But there's a little stuff, too. Like, when you're, yeah, when you're in your personal spaces, in the workplace, in your family, for example, like, not letting people erase your identity, like, asserting, like, asserting my pronouns is a huge thing that I do every day. Asserting my trans identity is a huge thing I do every day. And that has nothing to do with my public persona of a trans person. That has everything to do with, like, making changes in my community by being the first one to do so. And I'm not, like, the first non-binary person to speak up. But the more I do it, the more people get used to, in my work, like, specifically in, like, music, the more I normalize, like, being a non-binary person in music, the more people will, like, be mindful of, like, people's identities and pronouns and their presence and how to accommodate for that. And it's not always on, like, the marginalized person to do that, because obviously it has to come from the top two. But as someone who, like, will eventually be and is already in a leadership position, part of my work is to create an environment by speaking up, using my voice, and being a very vocal advocate for my people. In both big ways, like policy and, like, creating environment, and little ways, too, like affirming people who come in, who are in different parts of their trans journey, and being very vocal about who they are to other people.

Totally, thank you. Is there anything else you'd like to add for this interview? Any other thoughts that you have on this topic? Any other experiences or stories that you'd like to share?

Mm, not at this time.

All right, totally. Well, if there's nothing else you'd like to share, I think that's all the questions I have for you. So, thank you so much for sharing.

Yeah, of course. It's a vibe. Look at you, doing work in the trans community.

Yep, you know it.

Prifysgol Cymru
Y Drindod Dewi Sant
University of Wales
Trinity Saint David

PG2 / E1 FORM

APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL APPROVAL

RESEARCH STUDENTS
This form is to be completed by the student within **SIX** months for full-time students and **TWELVE** months for part time students, after the commencement of the research degree or following progression to Part Two of your course.

Once complete, submit this form via the ***MyTSD Doctoral College Portal*** at (https://mytsd.uwtsd.ac.uk).

This document is also available in Welsh.

RESEARCH STAFF ONLY
All communications relating to this application during its processing must be in writing and emailed to pgresearch@uwtsd.ac.uk , with the title 'Ethical Approval' followed by your name.

STUDENTS ON UNDERGRADUATE OR TAUGHT MASTERS PROGRAMMES should submit this form (and receive the outcome) via systems explained to you by the supervisor/module leader.

In order for research to result in benefit and minimise risk of harm, it must be conducted ethically. A researcher may not be covered by the University's insurance if ethical approval has not been obtained prior to commencement.

The University follows the OECD Frascati manual definition of **research activity**: "creative work undertaken on a systematic basis in order to increase the stock of knowledge, including knowledge of man, culture and society, and the use of this stock of knowledge to devise new applications". As such this covers activities undertaken by members of staff, postgraduate research students, and both taught postgraduate and undergraduate students working on dissertations/projects.

The individual undertaking the research activity is known as the "principal researcher".

Ethical approval is not required for routine audits, performance reviews, quality assurance studies, testing within normal educational requirements, and literary or artistic criticism.

Please read the notes for guidance before completing ALL sections of the form.

This form must be completed and approved prior to undertaking any research activity. Please see Checklist for details of process for different categories of application.

SECTION A: About You (Principal Researcher)

1	Full Name:		Jillian Elizabeth Carelli			
2	Tick all boxes that apply:		Member of staff:	☐	Honorary research fellow:	☐
	Undergraduate Student	☐	Taught Postgraduate Student	x	Postgraduate Research Student	☐

3	Institute/Academic Discipline/Centre:	Voice Study Centre/WAPPAR
4	Campus:	Carmathen
5	E-mail address:	2319770@student.uwtsd.ac.uk
6	Contact Telephone Number:	774.454.2374

	For students:	
7	Student Number:	2319770
8	Programme of Study:	Professional Practice MA Voice Pedagogy
9	Director of Studies/Supervisor:	Louise Emmanuel/ Julie Crossman/ Debbie Winter

SECTION B: Approval for Research Activity

1	Has the research activity received approval in principle? (please check the Guidance Notes as to the appropriate approval process for different levels of research by different categories of individual)	**YES**	☐	**NO**	x
				Date	
2	If Yes, please indicate source of approval (and date where known): ***Approval in principle must be obtained from the relevant source prior to seeking ethical approval***	Research Degrees Committee	☐		
		Institute Research Committee	☐		
		Other (write in) WAPPAR Ethics Board Representative	☐		

SECTION C: Internal and External Ethical Guidance Materials

	Please list the core ethical guidance documents that have been referred to during the completion of this form (including any discipline-specific codes of research ethics, location-specific codes of research ethics, and also any specific ethical guidance relating to the proposed methodology). Please tick to confirm that your research proposal adheres to these codes and guidelines. You may add rows to this table if needed.	
1	**UWTSD Research Ethics & Integrity Code of Practice**	x
2	**UWTSD Research Data Management Policy**	x
3	*Office for Human Research Protections: 45 CFR 46*	x

SECTION D: External Collaborative Research Activity

If there are external collaborators then you should gain consent from the contact persons to share their personal data with the university. If there are no external collaborators then leave this section blank and continue to section E.

1	Institution					
2	Contact person name					
3	Contact person e-mail address					
4	Is your research externally funded?	**YES**	☐	**NO**	☐	
5	Are you in receipt of a KESS scholarship?	**YES**	☐	**NO**	☐	

6	Are you specifically employed to undertake this research in either a paid or voluntary capacity?	Voluntary	**YES**	☐	**NO**	☐
7		Employed	**YES**	☐	**NO**	☐
8	Is the research being undertaken within an existing UWTSD Athrofa Professional Learning Partnership (APLP)?	If YES then the permission question below does not need to be answered.	**YES**	☐	**NO**	☐
9	Has permission to undertake the research been provided by the partner organisation?	(If YES attach copy) If NO the application cannot continue	**YES**	☐	**NO**	☐

Where research activity is carried out in collaboration with an external organisation

10	Does this organisation have its own ethics approval system?	**YES**	☐	**NO**	☐
	If Yes, please attach a copy of any final approval (or interim approval) from the organisation (this may be a copy of an email if appropriate).				

SECTION E: Details of Research Activity

1	Indicative title:	Impact of psychological stress on trans femme amab voices on HRT		
2	Proposed start date:	September 2024	Proposed end date:	November 2024

Introduction to the Research (maximum 300 words per section)

Ensure that you write for a <u>Non-Specialist Audience</u> when outlining your response to the points below:

- ***Purpose of Research Activity***

The purpose of this research is to give a greater understanding to the effects of trauma on the voice, and how that specifically impacts individuals who identify as transgender.

- ***Proposed Research Question***

How does previous psychological distress and trauma impact transgender femme AMAB (assigned male at birth) voices undergoing HRT?

- ***Aims of Research Activity***

I aim to understand how the voice and identity are intertwined and discuss how participants relate to their identity and voice as transgender people.

- ***Objectives of Research Activity***

I will survey participants and interview them in semi structured interview settings to discuss their experiences and perspectives on the lived experience of a trans person using their voice.

Demonstrate, briefly, how <u>Existing Research</u> has informed the proposed activity and explain

- ***What the research activity will add to the body of knowledge***

	• ***How it addresses an area of importance.*** There is existing evidence that the vocal apparatus reacts to stress which manifests in physiological and acoustic ways. There is existing research on how identity and the voice are intertwined- people can differentiate and identify individuals by their voice, humans observe and make judgements about each other by perceiving another's voice, and humans use their voices to express their identity. There is existing evidence that the vocal apparatus reacts to stress which manifests in physiological and acoustic ways. There is also existing research on how transgender and non-binary folk seek to have their voice align with their gender identity, and use hormone replacement therapy, and speech therapy to express their identity authentically. There is existing data on how transgender and non-binary people have experienced trauma oftentimes in the form of oppressive violence, abuse, and discrimination due to expressing their identity through various means but also through their voice. Voices are one of the key markers of identity since the vocal apparatus is utilised as one of the fundamental manners of human expression and are completely unique to each individual. Transgender and non binary individuals often undergo speech therapy in order to attain an instrument that fits their identity. Many transgender and non-binary people have been subject to prejudice, discrimination, and violence impacting their physical well being and their psychological well being.
3	**Purpose of Research Activity** The purpose of this research is to give a greater understanding to the effects of trauma on the voice, and how that specifically impacts individuals who identify as transgender. There is still very little research on transgender individuals and their experiences, and even less research on transgender and non-binary folk relate to and utilise their voices. This research will fill a gap in knowledge about an oppressed group of people, and obtain useful information that has the potential to understand the experiences of trans and non-binary voices on a physiological level concerning trauma as well as the impact of HRT and psychologically concerning how perception, identity, and mental health play a role in the use and health of the voice. Transgender and non-binary voices have been silenced by violence and oppression throughout history. This research will give a greater understanding of how these humans have been silenced, physiologically, psychologically, and socially. With this greater understanding of how their identity, life experiences, and mental/physical health impacts the vocal apparatus on a physiological and psychological level, trans folk can then take steps to utilise their voices to express themselves authentically. Voices communicate and advocate, and by trans people using their voices to speak and sing their truth and stories authentically to create a more equitable and accepting world. (this box should expand as you type)
4	**Research Question**

	How does previous psychological distress and trauma impact transgender femme AMAB (assigned male at birth) voices undergoing HRT? (this box should expand as you type)
5	**Aims of Research Activity** *To investigate how trauma impacts transgender voices by examining 3-5 individuals AMAB, identifying as transfemme, who are going through Hormone Replacement Therapy for more than 3 months and under 5 years.* (this box should expand as you type)
6	**Objectives of Research Activity** • *Understand how the voice and identity are intertwined* • *Discuss how trans and non binary folk relate to their identity* • *To determine how psychological trauma impacts the vocal apparatus using existing research* • *Investigate how psychological trauma impacts the perception of one's identity* • *Utilise causal comparative methods to draw correlations from existing research between identity and the voice, trauma and the voice* • *Create surveys to gather background information about participants* • *Administer Questionnaires to scale and quantify the experiences of participants* • *Conduct semi structured interviews about the participants experiences and perceptions on the topics of previous psychologically stressful events and how it relates to their voices* (this box should expand as you type)
	Proposed methods (maximum 600 words) Provide a brief summary of all the methods that **may** be used in the research activity, making it clear what specific techniques may be used. If methods other than those listed in this section are deemed appropriate later, additional ethical approval for those methods will be needed. You do not need to justify the methods here, but should instead describe how you intend to collect the data necessary for you to complete your project.
7	I aim to utilise mixed methods for conducting this research. By employing both qualitative and quantitative approaches, I will be able to take the numerical measurable data on aspects of physiology such as HRT, as well as qualitative data concerning experiences and descriptive data. **Review of evidence and literature** to inquire about how voice and identity are intertwined, and how the vocal apparatus reacts under stress. I will also use **semi structured interviews** inquiring and investigating the experiences of transgender individuals and identity, voice, and psychologically traumatic experiences. **Surveys** will be utilised to gather background information prior to conducting the interview, such as age, time undergoing HRT, types of hormones being taken. **Questionnaires** scaling the intensity of impact of their experiences will be given to the participants.

	(this box should expand as you type)
	Location of research activity Identify all locations where research activity will take place.
8	New York, New York and Boston, Massachusetts in the United States of America via Zoom (this box should expand as you type)
	Research activity outside of the UK If research activity will take place overseas, you are responsible for ensuring that local ethical considerations are complied with and that the relevant permissions are sought. Specify any local guidelines (e.g. from local professional associations/learned societies/universities) that exist and whether these involve any ethical stipulations beyond those usual in the UK (provide details of any licences or permissions required). Also specify whether there are any specific ethical issues raised by the local context in which the research activity is taking place, for example, particular cultural and/or legal sensitivities or vulnerabilities of participants. If you live in the country where you will do the research then please state this.
9	The National Institute of Health outlined seven principles for conducting ethical research with human subjects, which are: • Social and clinical value • Scientific validity • Fair subject selection • Favourable risk-benefit ratio • Independent review • Informed consent • Respect for potential and enrolled subjects Alongside the "Common Rule" which is based upon the Belmont Principles. These principals align with what ethical considerations are required in the United Kingdom and the university. There is also the issue of participant vulnerabilities as they are recalling previous psychologically distressing/traumatic events which may cause flashbacks, insomnia, trouble concentrating, or higher levels of anxiety, sadness, or anger for a prolonged period of time. According to the Belmont Principles, this can be mitigated by means outlined in Section H box 2 below. *(this box should expand as you type)*

10	Use of documentation not in the public domain: Are any documents **NOT** publicly available?	**NO**	■
		YES	☐
11	If Yes, please provide details here of how you will gain access to specific documentation that is not in the public domain and that this is in accordance with the current data protection law of the country in question and that of England and Wales. *(this box should expand as you type)*		

	Does your research relate to one or more of the seven aims of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015?	**YES**	**NO**
12	A prosperous Wales	☐	x
13	A resilient Wales	☐	x

14	A healthier Wales	☐	x
15	A more equal Wales	☐	x
16	A Wales of cohesive communities	☐	x
17	A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language	☐	x
18	A globally responsible Wales	☐	x
19	If YES to any of the above, please give details:		
	(this box should expand as you type)		

SECTION F: Scope of Research Activity

	Will the research activity include:	**YES**	**NO**
1	Use of a questionnaire or similar research instrument?	☐	x
2	Use of interviews?	☐	x
3	Use of focus groups?	☐	x
4	Use of participant diaries?	☐	x
5	Use of video or audio recording?	x	☐
6	Use of computer-generated log files?	☐	x
7	Participant observation with their knowledge?	x	☐
8	Participant observation without their knowledge?	☐	x
9	Access to personal or confidential information without the participants' specific consent?	☐	x
10	Administration of any questions, test stimuli, presentation that may be experienced as physically, mentally or emotionally harmful / offensive?	x	☐
11	Performance of any acts which may cause embarrassment or affect self-esteem?	☐	x
12	Investigation of participants involved in illegal activities?	☐	x
13	Use of procedures that involve deception?	☐	x
14	Administration of any substance, agent or placebo?	☐	x
15	Working with live vertebrate animals?	☐	x
16	Procedures that may have a negative impact on the environment?	☐	x
17	Other primary data collection methods. Please indicate the type of data collection method(s) below.		
	Details of any other primary data collection method: (this box should expand as you type)	☐	☐

If NO to every question, then the research activity is (ethically) low risk and **may** be exempt from **some** of the following sections (please refer to Guidance Notes).

If YES to any question, then no research activity should be undertaken until full ethical approval has been obtained.

SECTION G: Intended Participants

If there are no participants then do not complete this section, but go directly to section H.

	Who are the intended participants:	**YES**	**NO**
1	Students or staff at the University?	☐	x
2	Adults (over the age of 18 and competent to give consent)?	x	☐
3	Vulnerable adults?	☐	x
4	Children and Young People under the age of 18? (Consent from Parent, Carer or Guardian will be required)	☐	x
5	Prisoners?	☐	x
6	Young offenders?	☐	x
7	Those who could be considered to have a particularly dependent relationship with the investigator or a gatekeeper?	☐	x
8	People engaged in illegal activities?	☐	x
9	Others. Please indicate the participants below, and specifically any group who may be unable to give consent.		
	Details of any other participant groups: (this box should expand as you type)	☐	☐

	Participant numbers and source Provide an estimate of the expected number of participants. How will you identify participants and how will they be recruited?	
10	How many participants are expected?	3-5 *(this box should expand as you type)*
11	Who will the participants be?	Individuals who identify as trans femme, assigned male at birth, and are undergoing hormone replacement therapy for over three months and under five years. *(this box should expand as you type)*
12	How will you identify the participants?	I will approach trans organisations, and musical groups to identify potential participants, by using an advertisement detailing what this research entails. There are also specific individuals I am connected with who I will reach out to in a formal email as well. I am seeking trans femme assigned male at birth participants who are above the age of 18, been undergoing HRT for more than three months and less than 5 years. *(this box should expand as you type)*

	Information for participants:	**YES**	**NO**	**N/A**
13	Will you describe the main research procedures to participants in advance, so that they are informed about what to expect?	x	☐	☐
14	Will you tell participants that their participation is voluntary?	x	☐	☐

15	Will you obtain written consent for participation?	x	☐	☐
16	Will you explain to participants that refusal to participate in the research will not affect their treatment or education (if relevant)?	x	☐	☐
17	If the research is observational, will you ask participants for their consent to being observed?	x	☐	☐
18	Will you tell participants that they may withdraw from the research at any time and for any reason?	x	☐	☐
19	With questionnaires, will you give participants the option of omitting questions they do not want to answer?	x	☐	☐
20	Will you tell participants that their data will be treated with full confidentiality and that, if published, it will not be identifiable as theirs?	x	☐	☐
21	Will you debrief participants at the end of their participation, in a way appropriate to the type of research undertaken?	x	☐	☐
22	If NO to any of above questions, please give an explanation			
	(this box should expand as you type)			

	Information for participants:	**YES**	**NO**	**N/A**
24	Will participants be paid?	☐	x	☐
25	Is specialist electrical or other equipment to be used with participants?	x	☐	☐
26	Are there any financial or other interests to the investigator or University arising from this study?	☐	x	☐
27	Will the research activity involve deliberately misleading participants in any way, or the partial or full concealment of the specific study aims?	☐	x	☐
28	If YES to any question, please provide full details			
	I will be using recording devices to record the interviews to refer back to what the participants share *(this box should expand as you type)*			

SECTION H: Anticipated Risks

	Outline any anticipated risks that may adversely affect any of the participants, the researchers and/or the University, and the steps that will be taken to address them. If you have completed a full risk assessment (for example as required by a laboratory, or external research collaborator) you may append that to this form.		
1	**Full risk assessment completed and appended?**	**Yes**	☐
		No	x
2	**Risks to participants** For example: sector-specific health & safety, emotional distress, financial disclosure, physical harm, transfer of personal data, sensitive organisational information		
	Risk to participants: Recalling past psychologically stressful / traumatic experiences Asking questions about private information such as income and health treatment may be distressing for participants	*How you will mitigate the risk to participants:* Disclose any topics, study activities, or questions that may be triggering in the informed consent. Listing mental health resources that can assist the participants if they feel like they need professional help after recalling and reflecting upon these experiences.	

	(this box should expand as you type)	• Trans lifeline: (for participants who may be not located in the state of NY) (https://translifeline.org/ 1 8775658860) • Trans New York: (for participants local in my area) https://transnewyork.org/individual-support 917-789-7490. Clarify confidentiality policies. Disclose what identifiers may be disclosed, or are at risk of disclosure *(this box should expand as you type)*
3	If research activity may include sensitive, embarrassing or upsetting topics (e.g. sexual activity, drug use) or issues likely to disclose information requiring further action (e.g. criminal activity), give details of the procedures to deal with these issues, including any support/advice (e.g. helpline numbers) to be offered to participants. Note that where applicable, consent procedures should make it clear that if something potentially or actually illegal is discovered in the course of a project, it may need to be disclosed to the proper authorities	
	NA *(this box should expand as you type)*	
4	**Risks to the investigator** For example: personal health & safety, physical harm, emotional distress, risk of accusation of harm/impropriety, conflict of interest	
	Risk to the investigator: Risk of accusation/harm since I am asking participants to recall past psychologically traumatic experiences. Conflict of interest since I may or may not personally know the participants *(this box should expand as you type)*	*How you will mitigate the risk to the investigator:* Outline a detailed consent form, stating there is no intent to harm, only help grow the body of research Rely on my course instructor to ensure my personal relationships with participants does not create harmful bias *(this box should expand as you type)*
5	**University/institutional risks** For example: adverse publicity, financial loss, data protection	
	Risk to the University: Risk to University reputation if research is not conducted securely professionally and properly Potential Data breach *(this box should expand as you type)*	*How you will mitigate the risk to the University:* conduct research in a professional and ethical manner Storing data properly as per university guidelines *(this box should expand as you type)*
6	**Environmental risks** For example: accidental spillage of pollutants, damage to local ecosystems	
	Risk to the environment: NA *(this box should expand as you type)*	*How you will mitigate the risk to environment:* *(this box should expand as you type)*

	Disclosure and Barring Service			
	If the research activity involves children or vulnerable adults, a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) certificate must be obtained before any contact with such participants.	YES	NO	N/A
7	Does your research require you to hold a current DBS Certificate?	☐	x	☐
8	If YES, please give the certificate number. If the certificate number is not available please write "Pending"; in this case any ethical approval will be subject to providing the appropriate certificate number.			

SECTION I: Feedback, Consent and Confidentiality

1	**Feedback** What de-briefing and feedback will be provided to participants, how will this be done and when?
	Debriefing and feedback will be provided for participants. Participants will receive a copy of data collected about themselves, and also an overview of data collected and conclusions drawn in a document. This will be done once the module assignment is graded and returned with remarks. *(this box should expand as you type)*
2	**Informed consent** Describe the arrangements to inform potential participants, before providing consent, of what is involved in participating. Describe the arrangements for participants to provide full consent before data collection begins. If gaining consent in this way is inappropriate, explain how consent will be obtained and recorded in accordance with prevailing data protection legislation.
	Participants will be informed of how data will be collected through surveys, questionnaires, and semi structured interviews. They will know their data will be collected through google forms stored on google drive and the interviews will be held on the video chat platform Zoom and audio recorded. They will have a full understanding of the nature of the questions, the full scope of the topics, and how the data will be about their personal lived experiences. They will know they may withdraw at any time, and their data will be protected. They will sign their consent on a form I will create and verbally confirm their consent at the beginning of the interview. *(this box should expand as you type)*
3	**Confidentiality / Anonymity** Set out how anonymity of participants and confidentiality will be ensured in any outputs. If anonymity is not being offered, explain why this is the case.
	Participants will be protected with anonymity and be referred to by participant number. Their information will be kept confidential for the sole purpose of this research. *(this box should expand as you type)*

SECTION J: Data Protection and Storage

	Does the research activity involve personal data (as defined by the General Data Protection Regulation 2016 "GDPR" and the Data Protection Act 2018 "DPA")?	YES	NO
1	***"Personal data"*** *means any information relating to an identified or identifiable natural person ('data subject'). An identifiable natural person is one who can be identified, directly or indirectly, in particular by reference to an identifier such as a name, an identification number, location data, an online identifier or to one or more factors specific to the physical, physiological, genetic, mental, economic, cultural or social identity of that natural person. Any video or audio recordings of participants is considered to be personal data.*	x	☐
	If YES, provide a description of the data and explain why this data needs to be collected:		

2	Personal data will include age, occupation, physical and mental health information. This data needs to be collected as the research involves how the participants identify, express their identity, and their past and present experiences relating to events occurring to them previously and presently. *(this box should expand as you type)*		
	Does it involve special category data (as defined by the GDPR)?	**YES**	**NO**
3	***"Special category data"*** *means sensitive personal data consisting of information as to the data subjects' –* *(a) racial or ethnic origin,* *(b) political opinions,* *(c) religious beliefs or other beliefs of a similar nature,* *(d) membership of a trade union (within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992),* *(e) physical or mental health or condition,* *(f) sexual life,* *(g) genetics,* *(h) biometric data (as used for ID purposes),*	x	☐
	If YES, provide a description of the special category data and explain why this data needs to be collected:		
4	This special category data would include information regarding the participants physical and mental health, which needs to be collected in order to gain knowledge about how trans femme identifying individuals perceive their past experiences which may be stressful and or psychologically traumatic and how these occurrences impacted their vocal apparatus, which involves their physical health. *(this box should expand as you type)*		

	Will data from the research activity (collected data, drafts of the thesis, or materials for publication) be stored in any of the following ways?	**YES**	**NO**
5	Manual files (i.e. in paper form)?	☐	x
6	University computers?	☐	x
7	Private company computers?	☐	x
8	Home or other personal computers?	☐	x
9	Laptop computers/ CDs/ Portable disk-drives/ memory sticks?	x	☐
10	"Cloud" storage or websites?	x	☐
11	Other – specify:	☐	☐
12	For all stored data, explain the measures in place to ensure the security of the data collected, data confidentiality, including details of backup procedures, password protection, encryption, anonymisation and pseudonymisation:		
	Data will be kept confidential and secure in a password protected google drive account. Audio of the interviews will be transcribed and shared with participants for accuracy. All devices which the data is stored on are password protected. Participants will be kept anonymous by using a unique identifier. *(this box should expand as you type)*		

	Data Protection		
	Will the research activity involve any of the following activities:	**YES**	**NO**
13	Electronic transfer of data in any form?	☒	☐

14	Sharing of data with others at the University outside of the immediate research team?	☐	x
15	Sharing of data with other organisations?	☐	x
16	Export of data outside the UK or importing of data from outside the UK?	x	☐
17	Use of personal addresses, postcodes, faxes, emails or telephone numbers?	x	☐
18	Publication of data that might allow identification of individuals?	☐	x
19	Use of a data management system?	☐	x
20	Data archiving?	☐	x
21	If YES to any question, please provide full details, explaining how this will be conducted in accordance with the GDPR and Data Protection Act (2018) (and any international equivalents, where appropriate):		
	Since I am residing in the United States of America I will be exporting data from this country to the United Kingdom where I am enrolled in an online Masters program. I will be using my personal phone number to reach out to participants to coordinate the interviews. All data will be encrypted and kept in password protected cloud storage on Google Drive which will not be shared. Any USB sticks used to store or transfer data will be password protected. All data transfers will be encrypted, and password protected. All participants will be given a unique identifier to ensure confidentiality and this list will be kept securely in the password protected folder. The data will be stored until the completion of the project and then deleted. In accordance with the DPA2018 and the NIH Policy for Data Management and Sharing (DMS), participants will have the right to ask to see what data is held relating to them, and this data will be deleted immediately if the participant requests this, in which case the data will not be used in the project. *(this box should expand as you type)*		
22	List all who will have access to the data generated by the research activity:		
	Jillian Carelli and all course supervisors for this module of the professional practice course *(this box should expand as you type)*		
23	List who will have control of, and act as custodian(s) for, data generated by the research activity:		
	Jillian Carelli the sole and primary researcher *(this box should expand as you type)*		
24	Give details of data storage arrangements, including security measures in place to protect the data, where data will be stored, how long for, and in what form. Will data be archived – if so how and if not why not.		
	Data will be password protected in files on my computer and on Google Forms. Data will be stored while the module assignment is being completed.All data will be encrypted and kept in password protected cloud storage on Google Drive which will not be shared. Any USB sticks used to store or transfer data will be password protected and will be reformatted at the end of the project in order to destroy the data. The data will be stored until the completion of the project and then deleted. *(this box should expand as you type)*		
25	Please indicate if your data will be stored in the UWTSD Research Data Repository (see https://researchdata.uwtsd.ac.uk/). If so please explain. (*Most relevant to academic staff)*		
	(this box should expand as you type)		

26	Confirm that you have read the UWTSD guidance on data management (see https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/library/research-data-management/)	**YES**	x
27	Confirm that you are aware that you need to keep all data until after your research has completed or the end of your funding	**YES**	x

SECTION K: Declaration

	The information which I have provided is correct and complete to the best of my knowledge. I have attempted to identify any risks and issues related to the research activity and acknowledge my obligations and the rights of the participants. In submitting this application I hereby confirm that I undertake to ensure that the above named research activity will meet the University's Research Ethics and Integrity Code of Practice which is published on the website: https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/research/research-ethics/		
1	**Signature of applicant:**	Jillian Carelli	**Date:** **8/19/2024**

For STUDENT Submissions:

2	Director of Studies/Supervisor:	Laura James	**Date: 17.10.24**
3	Signature:	Laura James	

For STAFF Submissions:

4	Academic Director/ Assistant Dean:		**Date:**
5	Signature:		

Checklist: Please complete the checklist below to ensure that you have completed the form according to the guidelines and attached any required documentation:

■	I have read the guidance notes supplied before completing the form.
■	I have completed **ALL RELEVANT** sections of the form in full.
■	I confirm that the research activity has received approval in principle
□	I have attached a copy of final/interim approval from external organisation (**where appropriate**)
□	I have attached a full risk assessment (where appropriate) *ONLY TICK IF YOU HAVE **ATTACHED A FULL RISK ASSESSMENT***
■	I understand that it is my responsibility to ensure that the above named research activity will meet the University's Research Ethics and Integrity Code of Practice.
■	I understand that before commencing data collection all documents aimed at respondents (including information sheets, consent forms, questionnaires, interview schedules etc.) must be confirmed by the DoS/Supervisor, module tutor or Academic Director.

RESEARCH STUDENTS ONLY
Once complete, submit this form via the **MyTSD Doctoral College Portal** at (https://mytsd.uwtsd.ac.uk).

RESEARCH STAFF ONLY
All communications relating to this application during its processing must be in writing and emailed to pgresearch@uwtsd.ac.uk , with the title 'Ethical Approval' followed by your name.

Prifysgol Cymru
Y Drindod Dewi Sant
University of Wales
Trinity Saint David

PG2 / E1 FORM

STUDENTS ON UNDERGRADUATE OR TAUGHT MASTERS PROGRAMMES should submit this form (and receive the outcome) via systems explained to you by the supervisor/module leader.